

THE AGONISTS

MAURICE HEWLETT

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THE AGONISTS



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TORONTO

THE AGONISTS

A TRILOGY OF GOD AND MAN

BY

MAURICE HEWLETT

MINOS KING OF CRETE

ARIADNE IN NAXOS

THE DEATH OF HIPPOLYTUS

O hapless race of men, who when they charged
Such work, such wrath upon immortal gods,
Begot what groanings for themselves, for us
What wounds, and for our children's sons what tears!

LUCRETIVS, *De Rer. Nat.* v. 1183.

MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED
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DEDICATED
TO
G. M. P. W.-E.
1895-1911

INTRODUCTION

HERE are three barbarous old tales treated dramatically, the first and most barbarous never so treated before, I should suppose ; the second a favourite with the Italians of the Cinquecento, and the third the theme of tragic poets from Euripides onwards. Here, for the first time, they are related as they should be, so that, under one cover, the reader has, for what it may be worth, the fate of Minos and his family express before him. Primitive the tales certainly are ; but they are in the great manner. It will be my fault, not theirs, if in the presentation of them here they suffer any eclipse.

A good story well told will carry almost anything the author is capable of packing into it ; and in these three, I must explain, I have wished to present more than legend

alone. I have thought to find in them taken *seriatim*, and then together, a philosophical underflow which, if I have been rightly inspired, ought to be discernible in my music. There is an effort to express dramatically in *Minos King of Crete*, *Ariadne in Naxos*, and *The Death of Hippolytus*, respectively and collectively, the fallacies which underlay the ancient conceptions of Godkind and Mankind and accounted for the ancient views of their relationships. You take, as a starting point, the three essential qualities of God to be Power, Love, and Knowledge, and admit the essential qualities of Man to be the more excellent as they more nearly approach those of God ; and you have in each of these plays an example of the failure of a typical personage, God or man, for lack of one or other quality. Minos was the son of Zeus, and failed because, although he had Knowledge from his Father, he had not Power. In *Ariadne in Naxos* the God Dionysus is the protagonist, and his tragedy (and the woman's) lay in this, that he had Power over men, but could not win their Love. Lastly, in *The Death of Hippolytus*, we have a case of Love without

Knowledge—that is, self-knowledge. Collectively, the trilogy presents a tragic story of the failure of God to implant himself in man, and of man to receive into his nature the divine substance ; and the inference, or one of them, is, or may be, that the divine qualities can only mate with human faculty in the ideal presented to mankind in the Incarnate God of the Christians. To my mind that is clear. I hope some day to complete my trilogy with an Epilogue concerning the Passion of Christ. So much, then, for the under-current of this work, never obtrusive I hope ; for I realise exactly that a play cannot succeed upon philosophical excellence. If the story is dramatic and the numbers give it due lyrical expression, the philosophy may be interesting in itself and may enhance the interest in the plot ; but otherwise it can avail the poet nothing.

I should like to add a word as to the versification, to which I have, in every line, in every phrase, endeavoured to give an immediate, personal and musical impress. I mean by that that the prosody has varied throughout with the mood of the personages, and as the dramatic situation called forth

natural lyrical expression. There is no metrical system, consequently, but that conditioned by the subject ; yet I believe that, read aloud and as a whole, each play will induce a specific mood, a specific kind of emotion in the hearer. Believing as I do that all poetry must be addressed to the ear, as it is undoubtedly composed, I shall not deny that I have aimed at a totality of impression and have considered more the beauty of the whole than of the parts. Nor shall I deny that Wagner's method in opera has seemed to me entirely applicable to poetical drama. Wagner's libretti were written on a strict metrical system ; but his music was not. In my plays I have followed faithfully, I believe, the music which I have certainly heard, but am incapable of rendering otherwise than by rhythm. All that apart, I have never been able to see the propriety of expressing an infinite variety of moods in one conventional measure. Here, surely, poetry may borrow from prose without ceasing to be poetry. The burden of the iambic pentameter has been too many for the poets—and, it seems, for their hearers. Now all I ask

of mine is that the verse be read to them as prose, with the stresses where they would naturally fall, and full value given to the vowel sounds of ordinary speech. If this rule be observed, and the indicated pauses followed, the three plays ought to be revealed as verse.

I composed them in 1895-6-7; have tinkered them at intervals since. Finally I have thrown them back into the melting-pot, and they have emerged as good as I can make them.

LONDON, 1911.

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I

MINOS KING OF CRETE

THE ARGUMENT

KING MINOS of Crete claimed to be the Son of Zeus, who as a Bull had carried EUROPA, his mother, thither. His title was Son of the Bull, and that was the cognizance of his House. Now in the seventeenth year of his reign POSEIDON sent a white bull out of the sea to tempt him. Instead of offering it in sacrifice to that great God he caused DAEDALUS to devise a labyrinth at Cnossus in which to keep it. Then the curse upon his House began. His wife PASIPHAË sinned monstrously, and was delivered of MINOTAUR the monster, scourge and devourer of the Cretans. KING MINOS aghast, but knowing nothing of his wife's guilt, went to seek counsel in the next year of his reign of his Father and Lord on Mount Ida: for such was his custom every ninth year. While he was on his journey home to Cnossus, QUEEN PASIPHAË died. At this moment the play begins.

PERSONS

DAEDALUS, the Athenian.

GRAULIS, nurse to PASIPHAË.

A PRIEST OF ZEUS.

CRETAN ELDERS.

A HUNTSMAN.

MINOS.

PRIESTESS OF ARTEMIS DICTYNNA.

A MESSENGER from Athens.

A SECOND MESSENGER from the same city.

SCENE

The sea-wall at Cnossus. In the centre of the wall a watch-tower. Right, the King's House with the Judgment Seat. Left, Shrine of the Oracle of Artemis Dictynna.

TIME

Before Dawn, then Sunrise.

MINOS KING OF CRETE

As the curtains open DAEDALUS, sharp against the sky, is seen motionless on the watch-tower, looking eastward over the sea. The wash of the waves on the beach below the wall is all the sound heard. Presently, from the King's House comes the sound of low but continued wailing, as of women mourning. DAEDALUS lifts his arms out, holds them so, then drops them in despair.

He folds his cloak about him, and speaks, looking over the sea.

DAEDALUS

Watchman, wait thou and watch ;
The night neareth her death.
With her the wicked and weary alike
Make an end of moaning, sleep and forget ;

[He pauses, opens his cloak and lifts his hands.

And the sun sweetens the world !

[He lifts his face and turns his cheek to feel the wind.

A wind shivers the sea : with dawn
The King should come ; from the Gates of
the Sun,
He and the Dawn together !

He stands looking out in silence. The wailing of women in the house rises in volume and strength. DAEDALUS is aware of it now. A long note as of a trumpet ; then silence. DAEDALUS thrills and listens.

The wicked and weary shall end their
moaning,
The King come from the house of God—
He and the Dawn together !

GRAULIS comes quickly out of the King's House, holding high her hands.

GRAULIS

Daedalus ! Daedalus ! Daedalus !

DAEDALUS

I am about the death-bed of the Night.
Who calls ? Who comes between me and
my dead ?

GRAULIS

Death has been busy. Come down.
O Daedalus, come quick !

DAEDALUS

Thou, Graulis !
Stay, I come down.

He comes down from the wall and meets GRAULIS. She has covered her head, she bows it, and stretches out her hands like a blind woman feeling for the way. DAEDALUS watches her gravely.

DAEDALUS (very grave)

No need to cover thy head.

GRAULIS (whispering, in haste)

O Daedalus, come with me !

DAEDALUS

No need to peer upon me.

GRAULIS

I implore, I implore——

DAEDALUS

The sick breath of the night
Reads me thy rune.
So she is dead ! Died mad—
Loathing herself !
Speak, is that true ?

GRAULIS

She is dead, Daedalus.
Ah, man, have mercy !

(Lifting hands and voice)

Golden Pasiphaë is dead ! and we
Orphaned of so much light !
Ai, ai ! my lovely one, my lovely head !

[She rocks herself about.

DAEDALUS

Out on thy whining, woman. Thou and I
know
How lovely her life was, and whether blest.

GRAULIS (shocked)

Hush, O hush,
Blame not the dead.

(Brokenly)

She loved me, who was lovely, and is dead.

DAEDALUS

(Recoils, then snatches her wrist with fury)

Lovely, thou fond old fool !
Lovely ! whose hot sin
Made Heaven shudder, and Crete cower !
Made me a dog, and Minos
Byword of shame among men.

(Abruptly breaking off)

Tell me, old fool, of him
I dare not name—that thing
This lovely mother has made.

GRAULIS (in terror)

Hush, for God's pity !

DAEDALUS

But thou shalt speak——

GRAULIS (whispering)

Safe !

Safe in the web thy cunning wove for her
sake——

Safe while Crete feedeth it——

DAEDALUS

With blood !

GRAULIS (after a pause)

She died mad, craving the sight
Of that which her womb—of that dread !

DAEDALUS

Of her babe, thou wouldst say ?

GRAULIS (wildly)

Ah, no, no ! O God——

DAEDALUS turns his back on her and paces the scene.
GRAULIS comes after him to tell him the tale.

Lovely she was, and loved me, but died mad,
Not knowing of her sin, nor her sin's fruit,
Nor me, who knew of both, and loved her
still.

After that wild hour
When her dire anguish made a child of her,
And floated all her terror and her sin
Out in a tide together—she wailed all day,
“Ah, Graulis, Graulis, hold me, let not go,
My two hands, Graulis!” So she moaned
all day,
And all the long hot nights, but never saw
Who held her, stroked her hair, tendered the
cup
To her dry lips. . . . And she was my child,
Fostered upon my breasts! Shall a mother
hold back
When her child cries?
Wilt thou talk of her sin
To me, her mother, that loved her?
Out on thee, childless wretch!

All day, all night she clung and moaned for
me
To come—and I was there!
“Graulis!” she wailed, and “Graulis!
Graulis!
Come to me!” I, who was there!
Who never left her!
Only, in all that house, I loved her,
Only in all that house, she knew not me!
At last, as one that could bear no more
sorrow,
Nor separation from me, whom she loved—
And I there, holding her!—

She threw her two arms out, as a child,
And wailing, "I am thirsty, give me drink,"
Ere I could feed her, sighed her breath away,
And lovely lay
As if sin were not, and she
The last born sister of her children—
My Queen Pasiphaë—dead !

DAEDALUS

Dead of her sin,
And in sin, dead.

GRAULIS

No man could look and think sin,
Nor her rebuke. The perfect are a law
Unto themselves. Refuse her not
The peace she testifies.

DAEDALUS

Her sin is lead about her neck—
She drowns in it, and drowneth this land,
Tainted by her.

GRAULIS

Judge not thy benefactress, man.
As for me,
All my old breath shall honour her.

(Quickly)

And what of thee—that helped her ?

DAEDALUS

Helped her ?

GRAULIS

To hide her horror—ay !
Ay ! and to make her horror.

DAEDALUS

What of the King, thy master and mine ?
What of King Minos, coming home with
dawn ?

GRAULIS

What of him, servant of Minos,
Served as thou servedst him lately ?

[DAEDALUS stands confused.

(Eagerly)

Will he be served by tales of the dead ?
How shall it serve him to scorn the dead ?
Or tell the tale of the Sin ? Thou durst not
Deny the rites—thou durst not.

DAEDALUS turns away and hides his face. GRAULIS
watches him intently. Presently he uncovers and
looks skyward.

DAEDALUS

I loved her, she was lovely : let the rites
Be fully done, that so her soul go down
Decently to the windy house of the dead.

Then, when they see the stains upon her,
And Hell is silent, one shall say, O Lord,
King of the dark, this was a Queen :
She beareth sacrifice, her hands,
Her wicked body, are washed in water :
Take her, she was lovely, and loved much.

[He pauses, then adds grimly

And was much loved, God knows, and over
much !

[He turns to GRAULIS.

If thou wouldst hide these things, do the
rites now.

Set up the pyre, anoint, dress her fairly
In virgin white. So let her pass for a
Queen,
Not carrion.

Then meet Minos, Searcher of hearts !

[GRAULIS goes swiftly into the house.

A little while, O Crete,
And Daedalus, thy knave, must take his
wages,
Find the dark road, and journey it alone.

The shaping hand, the spinning brain,
The joy of his toil a man may take,
Soul, Soul, are these in vain ?
Heart, must thou break ?
Her heart to my heart leaned and spake
In urgent whisper and low,

“Do this sin for my body’s sake !”
O lovely body that I loved so,
O vile heart, that dared not know
Wreck of body and brain—
Nor thy toil vain !

He stands mute in despair. The PRIEST OF ZEUS
comes out of the shrine.

PRIEST

Dost thou watch, Daedalus ?

DAEDALUS

The morning breaks.

PRIEST

With comfort, or promise ?

DAEDALUS

The King cometh not.

PRIEST

Then is the End upon us.

DAEDALUS

There is Death : pray to him.

PRIEST

Minotaur hath more pity,
For he would end Crete in one drench of
Death ;
But the Gods kill slowly.

DAEDALUS

How long can we endure ?

PRIEST

Minotaur feedeth apace.

DAEDALUS

Death comes but once——

PRIEST

Shall a man live, with his fate
Burning before his face ?

DAEDALUS

He that knows he must die,
Does he care if he live ?

The funeral procession of women, bearing PASIPHÆ
uncovered on a bier, comes out of the King's House,
and passes over the stage to a wailing chant.

PRIEST

One dead !

DAEDALUS

Dead, dead.

PRIEST

What dreadful stroke——?

DAEDALUS

Ask me not. Death is busy here.
Better die quick, as she died.

PRIEST

Yes, for to wait,
To wait wide-eyed, worketh madness.

[He sings of the terror of Crete.

Men dare not meet each other
For fear to read the grief,
And weep to see it, and drown
All manhood out ; but each
Goeth apart with his mantle over his face,
And letteth the pain gride,
Hanker and grope in his heart ;
And setteth his teeth, lest his brother
See his pain, and utter a cry,
And a whole city go weeping.
So he endureth, till night
Cover him up from his brother's sight.

Look to the shore. What seest thou there ?

DAEDALUS (on the wall)

I see the dust of the surf.
The trees stir not ; birds float
Nested upon the waters.

[Smoke goes up from the sea-shore.

A soul goes shuddering out, like a prayer.
Pray for it.

[The rim of the Sun comes up from the sea.

PRIEST

Lo, lo, the Sun !
Your prayer is heard. Minos returns,
Heartened by secret lore—
Knowledge gotten of God.

DAEDALUS

Send so ! For if he knows, what need to
tell ?

PRIEST (inspired)

Nine years have waxed and waned
Since our Lord sought his Lord
On Ida, treading where
No foot of man might dare,
The thicket hushed by God.
Four cycles of such scope
Have crowned his sacred head

Since he, our final hope,
Took up the godlihead
His father gave. As a sword
He weareth Zeus's word,
And as a kingly cope
Lieth King Zeus's dread
On Minos, Son of Zeus,
Minos, Son of the Bull !

DAEDALUS, who has been watching, now sees a procession at hand.

DAEDALUS

Make now your prayer. See—
The Cretan Elders come to meet the Dawn.

PRIEST

Go down to them
While I cry to the Sun.

DAEDALUS

Nay, I have other work. Let Crete save
Crete.

DAEDALUS comes down from the wall and goes slowly into the King's House. The PRIEST turns him to the Sun, and prays with lifted hands. The ELDERS enter, singing the Parabasis.

CHORUS

First I salute you, Hills,
Guardians of Crete, with brows

Careful and hands uplift :
Thee, Dictè, beneath whose moon
Dwelleth the Goddess, the lonely one ;
Thee, Dictè, from whose bare crag,
Casting her delicate treasure
Seawards, the maid Britomartis
In death found life. Next to thee,
Ida ! whose haunts great Zeus
Knew and still loves.

You also,

Cydonian, Sea-Sentinels,
Sisters who, linkt in ice,
With glittering crowns arow,
Watch while night on the heels
Of day followeth and cloudeth them.
O ye dread haunts of God,
Pathless, dim and untrod,
By men adored from afar,
By that great strength ye are,
Holding your steadfast way
Through good and evil report,
Through tempest and our dismay,
Through blinding snow and frost—
Ye that only abide
Mid chance and change, for no man
Knows, nor his fathers have told him,
When ye were not as now—
Listen, each haunted place,
Ye hills, each quick with a God,
Listen ! most evil case
Is on us ; our feet have trod

The steep that leadeth astray
By pain from the clear way ;
We have slipt in our own blood,
And day draggeth on day !

Terrible rumour is heard from the city. They draw closer together, and whisper to each other.

How shall I tell the story,
The crying fear ?
The watchman dead at his post,
Stiffened with fear as a man bitten by frost !
Doom in the thick air !

[A loud cry. Then silence.

The sound of a voice in fear !
One shrill cry like a trumpet blast—
And again—and again !
The Guard called out, the Assembly in haste,
The panic, the rain
Of voices—"I saw it !" "O hush ye !"
" 'Tis here ! "

"Make fast !"
"Are the children past ?"
"Are they safe at home ?" All the stifled
pain,
The open dread
Of men shamefully dead
Lies about Cnossus, darkens her ways.

[Another cry, with the scream of a woman.

Minotaur ! Minotaur ! Minotaur !
Blood-feeder, raving, insatiate

Lecher for flesh !
Curious lust and inordinate
Hanker for delicate meat !
Sweet blood, light breath,
Virginal breath he needeth ;
Day after day he feedeth
Upon the treasure we cherish !
Child after child of ours,
Fruit of our love's flowers,
We must see perish !
Not our paid lives
Whose work is over and past he craveth—
More than that a mother will spend
For the life she loveth,
To die that it live !
We have fathers to give
Their joyance of days for the sons they
 begat—
But Minotaur slayeth more rarely :
Leaveth the sire, leaveth the dam
For the little lamb—
Slowly, surely, ravenous, taketh him !

Their fear gives way to repining. Then with a
common impulse they turn imploring to the Shrine of
Dictynna.

Queen of the Hills, O Maid
Stainless, the unafraid,
From whose grave, tender eyes
Light as of evening skies
Shineth and sheddeth balm

On men ! O quiet and calm,
Thou who with bent down head
Dost stand above the bed,
And with thy torch's light
Direct the newborn sight —
Unto thy holy face,
That its first view be grace—
Hear us and help us Thou,
Maid of the open brow !

They stand with stretched-out arms, as if expecting a sign ; but none comes. Then they turn to their philosophy.

Seeing to none 'tis given
To read wisdom from Heaven ;
Seeing the Gods reign
Neither pitying our pain,
Nor stooping, rather pursuing
Their sport in our undoing—
It doth become us, earthwise,
To You, Hills, to lift our eyes ;
Loving the ancient law,
To fold us within your awe,
Win strength from your strength to abide
What fortune us may betide.

They now turn their faces above the city to the ramparting hills.

O ye hills, grant us your patience ;
O hills, your peace be upon us !
May the good Gods of the hills
Lay benediction upon us !

The PRIEST, his prayer finished, joins the ELDERS
and speaks with them.

PRIEST

Sons, ye do well to call upon your hills,
For there She wonneth who is Lady of them.

CHORUS

Hymnia called, best praised in song—
Seeing her breath is music.

PRIEST

This load shall lift and pass
With the King's coming.
He, Minos, alone
In Ida's thicket, there
Alone with his father Zeus,
Gains secret wisdom from him
Of cause, and purpose, and law—
Evil and Good to see, to weigh, and to
choose.
Burdened with which awful freight
He cometh—peace to ensue.

CHORUS I

Great is Minos ! But see—
Who is this newcomer ?

CHORUS II

Bringing the smell of woods
And dust of country ways
Within these tainted walls !

CHORUS I

This is some uplander,
Huntsman grim with weather,
Who not as a townsman walks.

CHORUS III

Nay, but as master of Time,
Not the pitiful slave.

The HUNTSMAN has entered the city. He is the embodiment of earthy simplicity and plain dealing. The ELDERS watch him, and converse in undertones as he looks deliberately about him.

CHORUS

What needest thou
In the King's Gate ?
What dost thou seek
With thy steady eyes ?
Is it a vow
Of love or hate
Draweth thee on,
Purposeful,

To the strong tower
Of the House of the Bull ?

He comes towards them : they await him now in
silence.

HUNTSMAN

Tell me if this is Cnossus, that the House
Of Minos, King in Crete.

CHORUS

An hundred cities hath Crete,
Lordship from sea to sea,
Whereof the frontal jewel
Is Cnossus ; wherein thou art—
Cnossus : for here King Zeus,
When he had stemmed the flood—
God veiled in the girth
And silken hide of a Bull—
Splendid lover, abode
With the white maid
Europa, chosen and set
Apart to be mother of Kings,
Sons of God ! Here our Lord,
Splendid lover, saw light
Flutter and fill the eyes
Of Minos, glory of Crete,
Son of the Bull !

But thou, who art thou ? Whence come ?
From what outland, to seek him ?

HUNTSMAN

From Ida come I, from the forest,
To meet this Minos.

PRIEST

From Ida, thou ! Dost thou know
The holy Mount, and the Grove
Sacred to Zeus, where no man
Dare tread, lest he meet with God ?

HUNTSMAN

I know the place, and that God
Walketh in secret there
Unshadowed by Sun.

CHORUS

Seek Minos there.
There he walketh with God !

HUNTSMAN

Betimes I left it ; the moon
Shone in the trees. I saw no man.

CHORUS

How shouldst thou see
King Minos, walking with God !

HUNTSMAN (slowly)

Walketh Minos with God ?

PRIEST

Each ninth year he is rapt
Deep into Ida ; and God
Breathes upon him, and pours
Wisdom into his ear.
Then he comes home a God—
God to Crete and this people.

The HUNTSMAN ponders this saying in silence, leaning upon his spear. His questions following are very slow and deliberate, the answers quick and eager.

HUNTSMAN

And now on Ida he walks—
He, Minos, with God ?

CHORUS

A Son, he walks with his father.

HUNTSMAN

Nine years ago he walked
Ida ? Minos with God ?

CHORUS

A son, with his father Zeus.

HUNTSMAN

Minos alone !

CHORUS

Alone with God.

[A pause.

HUNTSMAN

I need to see this Minos.

[The ELDERS are amazed,

CHORUS

Thou ! What is thy need ?
Is it a grief ? A sin done ?

HUNTSMAN

Grief, a sin, a wrong done ;
A price for blood,
A life for a life :
These I require of Minos.

They enquire of each other dumbly, then volubly
of him.

CHORUS

Thou hast a blood-feud smouldering. Against
whom ?

HUNTSMAN

Minos, the wise king, shall point him out.

CHORUS

Who shed this blood? Knowst thou the
man?

HUNTSMAN

That Son of God will know him.

CHORUS

Yet I would learn thy grief.

[A pause.

HUNTSMAN (incisively)

Britomart's was my grief :
My sister, she.

The ELDERS shrink back. All know the tale of
BRITOMARTIS.

CHORUS

Alas for her ! Alas
For thee, O friend !

The HUNTSMAN rehearses his tale of BRITOMARTIS, as
in a reverie.

HUNTSMAN

On Dicté, fronting the sea,
Standeth the House of the shining One,
Artemis, Delian-born.
There served her Britomartis,

Virgin-witness, my sister,
Vowed to the Virginal Goddess,
Patroness of the pure.

CHORUS

Artemis hath her now—
Comfort thee, friend.

HUNTSMAN

We, in our father's house,
Dwelt on Ida ; and saw
(White as her soul) the shrine
Heading the sea, as peak
Looks upon peak from afar.

CHORUS

Dicté and Ida, twin holds
Of Godhead ! Speed with thy tale.

HUNTSMAN (slowlier)

Upon a day
My sister left her charge, to keep the feast
Of the New Wine at home. Ere next day
dawn
She left our hold : I watched her on the way
Go down the valley by the winding road,
Over the river bed, and by the bank
Slow-climbing, breast the steep
Where Dicté fronts the sea.

(Quickening)

I saw a horseman ride fast,
Draw rein beside her, and stoop,
Snatch, lift her up, drive spurs
Deep—carry her off
Over the windy hill.
I saw her plead with wild arms,
Flung back head, streaming hair—
Vain ! He had her. But she,
Sudden, shook free, and on wings
Fled down the wind, he pursuing,
Husbanding his long lust.
Dicté she clomb, whence the sea
Lies far below, without sound,
Deep-twinkling, not resting,
Surging, drifting for ever !
To that dim sea she held out
Wide her piteous hands,
Making her moan and prayer,
“Maid of all maids, take me,
Hold me fast !” O’er the steep
Into blue air she launched
Her soul’s frail raft—and from Ida
I wailed her name, and still wail it !

[He pauses, then resumes.

And he, ravisher, thief,
Rode his desolate way, scourging the earth
As a black squall whippeth the sea.
But I shall meet him : life for a life.

The ELDERS respect his vendetta, but try their philosophy upon him.

CHORUS

Britomart's ghost, querulous,
Men say, still flits about
The precinct where her heart
Was fixt, and in the night
Her prayers sob round the aisles.
So the haplessly dead,
Pluckt too soon from the earth,
Haunt it still, living again
Unsubstantially there !

PRIEST

Man's spirit never wholly leaves the earth
Until the debt he oweth, and the debts
Not paid him have been balanced and writ
off.
Often-times we are debtors to the dead.

HUNTSMAN

There is a debtor to *my* dead
Not quit. Minos must pay him.

Rumour swells as the stage lightens with the sun.
The PRIEST sees the palace doors open and the slaves
come out to lay a carpet on the steps. He points his
hand towards them. Rumour, as if from the house,
swells and gains volume.

PRIEST

O timely, timely is Minos !
Even as our lord the Sun
Out of the eastern gates,
So from his Golden House cometh the King.
Set thou thy grief on his knees,
Friend. Be sure he can lay
Thy dead, so her sobbing and wailing
Flit not the night through round the eaves.

The HUNTSMAN withdraws himself to the shadow of
the wall, where he waits and watches.

CHORUS

Would that our grief could find as easy a
cure !
But Death done gentlier weighs than death
to come.

PRIEST

Yea, it is Minos ! O come,
Let us fall at his feet,
As to a pitiful father and wise.

CHORUS

His glory is like a cedar
Dominant in the forest,
Whose branches still the air
And roots hold earth in fee.

MINOS comes out of his house and faces the people.
All raise their hands as to a vision of God.

CHORUS

Stand fast for ever, chosen of Zeus !
Son of the Bull, fast for ever !
Lord of Crete and the Islands, Son of the
Bull !

What, are my eyes so dim,
Is their light gone out ?
Is a God come, dreadful, with thunder-
shout ?
Nay, thou fool, 'tis the Sun cometh out
To shame the darkness and doubt.

[They hold out their arms to him, imploring.

Give us our dead, Minos !
Give us peace and our dead !
Peace that in elder days
Spread the warmth of her eyes,
The rose of her welcoming mouth,
Gladdened us, praying to her !

[The PRIEST bids them be silent.

PRIEST

The King speaks from his high throne !
Wisdom hath found her an house ; from the
gates of his lips
She poureth her embassies forth.

[MINOS, standing up, speaks.

MINOS

Sons, for I call you sons,
Sons whom my father Zeus
Laid on the fragrant lap
Of Crete, your mother, and bade me
Cherish you as I loved her !
See now, through fair and foul
Seasons I gave ye my days,
All the worth of my manhood,
Fruit of my age and blood,
Statecraft, lore ; add to that
Counsel got from my father,
That ye might prosper. But now,
Seeing ye prosper not,
Seeing that peace which ye had
Is no peace, fast have I been
In Ida, with Zeus my father,
Spending the dew of prayer,
Watching out nights and days,
Yearlong watching ! And lo,
Our Lord in the forest breath,
Adown the trees whispered, Go thou
Back to thy House ; seek Dictynna,
The shining One, for a sign.
Thus come I from his knees
To her knees ; thus will I do.

The people keep silence. The PRIEST voices their anguish.

PRIEST

None too soon, Minos, thy sign.
Minotaur ravens ; our children die.

MINOS crosses to the Shrine, mounts the steps and stands before the altar. They light the altar-fire. As he makes his prayer he pours on wine and scatters frankincense.

MINOS

Let me speak now, for lo !
The sun is broad on the world.
Give me drink-offering ; cast down
Your poppy crowns on the floor.
Pouring the wine now, I say
To thee, Dictaeon, the white,
The perfect, whom we of all Gods
Know best and oftenest invoke
At each new moon, behold !
In an acceptable time
My prayer for light, since clear light
From Heaven's threshold spreads on the
world.
Surely the time is ripe,
Goddess ! I, being old,
With dreadful knowledge instored
Of dreadful deeds, can no more
Drag my fardel, but set it
Down, and my sons set down
Theirs, and await thy word.

PRIEST

Ah, swift and secret ! Ah, Huntress,
Who when the night is high
Rangest abroad through the brake
Euboean, or where the hills
Like unto silent waves
Beset green Arcady !

O steadfast and sure, O holy,
O grey-eyed Maiden far-seeing,
O lovely as light on the hills,
O kind as the sun on the hill-tops !
O clear and pure, to whose beam
Is given to cleave things hid
In men's dark souls—lift now
The shroud of pain from our heads !

Like as the wretch who in fever
Turneth his aching eyeballs
In thought to the water meadows,
And in thought slaketh his tongue
In running brooks, so thy children
Stifled in sin, crave
One pasture-fragrance from Thee
Who savourest earth and blassest it.

All wait expectant. The veil of the Shrine is pulled back by invisible hands, and the PRIESTESS, shrouded all but the face in white linen, is seen swaying above the tripod.

PRIEST (aloud)

Lo, the unveiling !
Fire and mist !

MINOS

Speak, Goddess !

PRIEST

Hush, for she speaks !

The PRIESTESS speaks the Oracle, in a monotone, as if by rote.

PRIESTESS

The voice of the fire in my voice
Speaking to you, Crete :
Because ye have made choice
Of sin, with tears shall ye eat
Ashes and dust for your meat,
And salt blood for your wine.
Ye have chosen with Hell your seat,
Saith the Goddess, instead of mine ;
And that law is a law divine,
Where soweth a man he shall reap.
How shall ye ask a sign,
Saith the Holy One, while ye weep ?
Work, work, ere ye sleep,
Hold ye the ancient road ;
Tho' stony it be and steep,
Ye shall win if ye take it, saith God.
The road that your fathers trod

Ye shall be saved if ye run—
But woe upon woe till the blood
Of the Bull be drained and done.

The Oracle is slowly veiled. Confused murmurs beset the crowd, in the midst of this MINOS utters a cry, and all are silent.

MINOS

The bull's blood ! Lo, my sin
Rises and shakes his head.

CHORUS (murmuring)

What blood of what bull is this ?

MINOS

The bull's blood ! Thou art stern,
Poseidon, shaker of earth.

PRIEST

What wit save thine can fathom
The rune we have here ?

MINOS (to himself)

How shall a man know
Fate in his deed ? 'Tis done ;
From it grown rank, like flies,
Issues innumerable
Spread spores of death !

The people buzz among themselves, while MINOS, heard only by the PRIEST, moralises.

CHORUS

When the word went forth, like an arrow in
flight
From a ventureful bow drawn to its height,
Even as the struck eagle reels, and the night
Filmeth his eyes, the King in his state
Droops ; and his panoplied might
Drags on his shrunken limbs, intol'able
weight.

MINOS (aside)

Be sure a man's sin must out ;
Time not hide it, nor pomp
Of deeds glorious. Below
His broad raiment his limbs,
Starved, naked, behold !

CHORUS

I know that the mind of a man is a sherd
Stored with knowledge like wind ; for his
word
Bringeth no deeds to pass. Nay ! as a herd
Of kine passion driveth our wits
Hither in panic, thither when lust is stirred—
And Care the fisherman setteth his nets.

MINOS (aside)

Too old am I, that with face
Of brass I should bid fall

Dire mischance, sooner than shame
Confound me. Nay, an old man
Knoweth his strength.

CHORUS

Care the fisherman lays his net wide
Where the water hisses and spurts with the
tide.
Man in that sea, haggard-eyed,
Recketh not how the mesh edgeth him in,
Creepeth, clingeth about his side,
And the flood brimmeth up to his chin.

[The PRIEST holds up his hand.

PRIEST

Peace, for the King will speak.

CHORUS

Peace, let the King speak.

MINOS (slowly)

I did a violence to God,
To Poseidon, when swoln with heat
Of renown I wagered against him
Power for power, and knowledge
For knowledge : man against God.

Poseidon sent a white bull from the sea
To tempt me. Now the time was at hand

When lining the shore we invoke
The Sea-God and the Nymphs to bless our
 increase,
Offering sacrifice
A yearling bull, unblemisht, white as the
 foam,
Even as this one, sent to tempt me.
Now therefore came the Priests to where I
 sat
Solemn in judgment, saying
"O King, Poseidon needeth back the bull ;
Crown him with laurel leaves and let him
 die,
That smoke of him ascend and all be well."

Thus they, but I whom Zeus delights
To honour, shipt dishonourable thought
Of that old Sea-God lurking in the deeps ;
Hardened my heart,
Sent them empty back to their rites,
To fruitless altars and foodless fires ;
And kept the bull to crown my herds
And be a standing glory—like a wreath
Of flowers set on a chapless skull.

Poseidon waiteth patient like the sea
That draws all men to serve it late or soon,
And calls me now by terrors on my head,
Ringing words hounded about the sky,
"Woe upon woe, till the bull's blood
Be out." The bull's blood ! God is wrath,
And ye have paid in blood and tears

What only I should pay. If I, being King,
 Sinned as a King, so kinglike I say
 I am King enough to be ashamed of shame.
 Let Daedalus win out
 This white bull from the hold his wit
 devised ;
 Bring him out, set a wreath upon his neck,
 Gild him the horns and slay him, that the
 blood
 Smoke over sea, and the sea be fed.
 Let one seek Daedalus.

A bystander goes into the house. The CHORUS face
 the sea, while MINOS stands broodingly.

CHORUS

The sea is inexorable,
 More than all the masters of men ;
 For the wind that furiously rideth,
 The storm's war before which man hideth,
 The Earthquake's tearing and rending
 A sudden pit for life's quick ending—
 What are such deaths but a flash in a pan ?
 Ah, but the patient sea
 Ripples innumerably,
 Laugheth quiet and slow
 From ebb to flow ;
 Bideth his time till the extreme hour be run,
 Then he calleth the sea-farers one by one.

While the People chant this chorus, GRAULIS and
 DAEDALUS come out of the house and kneel before KING
 MINOS.

MINOS

What is this, Graulis ? Leavest thou thy
mistress ?

GRAULIS

Lord, Lord !

MINOS

How fares thy mistress and my Queen ?

DAEDALUS (quickly)

Well, Sir.

She was tired, but sleepeth now.

MINOS (to Graulis)

Speak thou. What seek thine eyes ?
Look upon me.

GRAULIS

Sir, thy glance troubles me. Thou art high,
And I am lowly, a slave.

MINOS

Thou art shorn, woman. Thou mournest—
whom ?

GRAULIS

Nay, 'twas a fever I had. Thus they rid it.

MINOS

What smoke of sacrifice went up
As I rode hither? 'Twas dense in the air.

GRAULIS

They burn sea-wrack at the water's edge.

MINOS

What wailing heard I of women?
What cries to Heaven?

GRAULIS

Sea-birds' cries, clamorous
About the harvested sea.

[A pause. MINOS reflects.]

MINOS

I would that I saw thy mistress.
Lieth she still abed?

GRAULIS

Still, my lord, very still.

MINOS

Stirred she not when the heralds
Shrilled me upon the walls?

GRAULIS

So deep she was, she stirred not.

MINOS

Let her wake now.

[GRAULIS is silent.

Answerest thou not ? Why camest thou ?

GRAULIS

Sir, I know not—Oh, Sir—
Oh, Great King——

MINOS

What then ?

GRAULIS

I may not waken her.

MINOS

Thou art not yet so old that death were
sweet ;
Nor will it serve the Queen
That thou die, and I waken her.
Do thou my bidding. Hence !

GRAULIS goes out with bowed head. MINOS turns to
DAEDALUS.

Athenian, servant of my will,
Heed thou me.

[The agitation of the People grows.

The Goddess spake above the altar flame,
Murmurously through the thick smoke of
the fire,

“Woe,” said she, “upon woe,
Woe upon woe till the bull’s blood be
out.”

I take the sin upon me, since I have sinned.

[The People mark DAEDALUS’ confusion and silence.

DAEDALUS

The Bull’s Blood !

[He stands aghast.

Here is no sin of thine.

Herein is Fate.

[The agitation of the People breaks out.

CHORUS

Ah, would that some green brake
Of fern and leafy tree
Hid up and sheltered me !

MINOS

Ay, but the sin was mine !
Poseidon calls for the bull,
The white bull from the sea.

[DAEDALUS says nothing.

Now if I slay him and pour back his blood,
Shall not the curse be out ?

[DAEDALUS says nothing.

Speak thou ! Shall it not be out ?

DAEDALUS

Not so, Minos, not so.

MINOS

Not so ?

CHORUS

O that some warm sweet wave
New freshening from the sea
Might wash and quicken me !

DAEDALUS

That white bull which my wit,
Quickened by thy decree,
Kept from the sea his master
In secret hold, hath begot
Offspring terrible, strange.
Not out is the blood by the death of the
Sire.

MINOS gazes at DAEDALUS, and in a dead silence
questions him.

MINOS

Where is the young of him, Daedalus ?

CHORUS (slow and urgent)

O wave, O breath of the wind,
O ye hills calm and free,
Make me strong, nourish me !

MINOS

Where is the young of him, Daedalus ?

DAEDALUS

Safe, while ye feed him on Cretan lives.
The Labyrinth holds him fast.

MINOS (aloud)

Minotaur ! (Pause.) And the Dam ?
Speak !

[Dead silence.

DAEDALUS

The dam died—of late.

[Minos ponders him terribly.

CHORUS (low and urgently)

O pluméd Night, O Death,
Cover me silently,
Hide me, encompass me !

MINOS

Dark are thy words, but more dark
The thoughts that throng me, and press
My pulses to wild surmise.

[He stops there, then asks suddenly.

What of the Queen ? Where is she ?

DAEDALUS

The Queen is dead. She is dead.
Ask me no more.

[MINOS draws back and looks terribly about him.

CHORUS (in terror)

Clamour is round me of sin not to be named,
Hissed from shooting and hidden lips ;
Hints, intervals of doubt,
Wailing, unrest !
But silence is worst of all—
When the dread powers of the dark
Gather, crowd and pass over
Like birds in a winter night !

MINOS starts forward and clutches DAEDALUS by the throat.

MINOS

Dog, here is work of thine !
That which thou didst for Son, didst thou
for Sire.
And the dam, Daedalus !

MINOS holds DAEDALUS shaking by the throat, and speaks to him fiercely, while the People wail and toss their arms.

CHORUS

The seed of man was sown
In the broad lap of the Earth :
So she conceived and gave birth.

MINOS

Pasiphaë is dead. And thou,
Shalt thou live, Daedalus ?

CHORUS

Earth was he, body and bone,
Of Earth's blind ways, her delight,
Clinging to sight.

MINOS

What shall be done to such—
A trafficker in women, Daedalus ?

CHORUS

But his blood and his breath
Were wilder than aught that dwelleth in clay.
Liquor of God were they.

MINOS

Thou that didst cage the bull to serve her,
Shall his seed not fatten on thee ?

CHORUS

Fire-fraught was his blood,
Hiding a fire, seeking more fire
For food of its whole desire.

And the tide of his blood
Surged against the walls of his veins,
Maddened his reins !

That most fatally dowered,
Prometheus, of all men's seed,
Lifted up restless eyes
From our most gentle earth,
And sought the glint of the skies,
And stole immortal fire,
To our immortal woe.

For that keen flame of Heaven,
Swifter than glancing light
Or leap of sound, than the air
More subtle, than day more bright—
Thought ! which to God is given
Creative, is our despair,
And a weight we cannot bear.

It flickereth in the brain,
It throbbeth in the heart ;
Before its flashing our eyes
Dazzle ; we reel and go
Whither our hot thought flies,

Up to the deathless Gods—
O Fools, it is vain !

Man is a cage of pain,
His thought is a pure thin fire
That beateth against the locks
And bonds of his grosser part,
Astrain for the sky. And behold !
The flame roareth and rendeth,
And the war nor stayeth nor endeth.

Then at last when the bars
Of the body, shattered and torn,
Rend asunder, the flame
Winneth the bitter stars,
And man lieth prone in shame :
Better not to be born !

MINOS has released DAEDALUS, and stands in deep thought. The HUNTSMAN now advances and confronts the King. The People remark him.

Who moves ? Who presses forward ?
Watch that man.
What needest thou
In the King's Gate ?
What seekest thou
With thy sunken eyes ?
Hast thou a vow ?
Is it love or hate
Draweth thee on,
Purposeful,

To the strong tower
Of the Sons of the Bull ?

HUNTSMAN

Minos, thou wise King, heed me.

MINOS

Who art thou ?

HUNTSMAN

Grief that cries solace.

MINOS

Cry not in vain.

HUNTSMAN

Justice thou art. Do justice then.

MINOS

Rehearse thy plaint. Who art thou ?

HUNTSMAN

One set apart
To one fixed work.
Blood calls to me for blood.

MINOS

A blood-price? For what blood? How
shed?

HUNTSMAN

A virgin shed her own bright blood.

MINOS

By her own act slain?
What blood for blood self-shed hast thou?

HUNTSMAN

His that made death her need.

MINOS

Who wagers her his life?

HUNTSMAN

I wager.

MINOS

And if thou diest?

HUNTSMAN

I stand for the right. I die not.
Artemis points my blade.

MINOS steadfastly regards him without speaking.
Presently he changes the theme.

MINOS

Not every huntsman pleaseth Artemis.

HUNTSMAN

True. He that hunted down the maid to
death
Pleaseth not her.

MINOS

Palterest thou ?
What is thy lot in this ?

HUNTSMAN

My sister was the maid.

MINOS

Speak plainer, who this was.

HUNTSMAN

Her blood was Britomart's.

The King starts back, and his eyes at first meet the
HUNTSMAN's, then quail. The People observe it.

CHORUS

The King shrinketh, the man scorches him
down !
As fire eateth a beam

So advanceth the gleam
Of his hot-set eyes !
Mark Daedalus. What is this thing
Come to confront the King ?

MINOS speaks as if unconscious of his whereabouts, as
a sleeper to a shape in his dream.

MINOS

I know thee not.

[The other leaps forward, transfigured with rage.

HUNTSMAN

Man, thou knew'st Britomart !
Judgment, thou Son of Zeus,
Son of the Bull ! let thy blood
Wager against my blood !

The People are amazed. The PRIEST tries to move
them.

PRIEST

Blasphemous, highland dog !
Shall my ears not bleed ?

HUNTSMAN

Let the King speak.

[But the King is not ready.

CHORUS

As elms in autumn show a hint of fire
Ere all their goodly green is set in blaze,

And give to flame their topmost boughs,
So is our good lord's kingly calm
Ploughed by contorted pain
That shudders over him and dies again
Under his sovran will.

But this dark tale of violence done
To Dictynna's consecrate one !
This wild old tale of passion
Shaking the seat of the soul's possession !
How shall I hear it and stand
Armed to defend the Cretan land
In the old fearless fashion ?

The PRIEST reasons with the People, and then
exhorts MINOS.

PRIEST

His sudden frenzy marks him out possessed :
How else dare such contempt ? Oh, turn,
Turn, Lord ! Smite on the hip
This dog that snarls at honour ! Strike
This blasphemer ! Up, Minos !
Son of Zeus, stand up !

CHORUS

It is well said, it is well said.
Is Minos a King for nought ?

[MINOS stands forward, now again master of himself.

Fast for ever, chosen of Zeus !
 Son of the Bull, fast for ever !
 Lord of Crete and the Islands, Son of the
 Bull !

What, are my eyes so dim,
 Is their light gone out ?
 Is a God come, dreadful . . . ?

[The People falter and stay, as MINOS begins to speak.

MINOS

Neither denying, nor grudging
 Thy full requital of blood ;
 Excusing not, nor accusing ;
 Making no haste to slay,
 Neither to save thee, I give thee
 All thy desire. Take up now
 In battle thy blood-feud. Not vain
 My Kingship, nor yet in vain
 The lineage of Zeus, and my lineage
 Shining within my Son.
 Behold, I wager my Son,
 Androgeos.

The People murmur. DAEDALUS starts and looks at
 MINOS.

HUNTSMAN

I am content.
 Yet if thy son fight
 This battle of thine, he dies—

And the Bull's Blood be out,
As it was foretold.

CHORUS

The Bull's Blood ! O thou fool !
Knowest thou thy saying ? O fool !

DAEDALUS

Let not my Lord say so, let him heed.
Androgeos hath no charm'd life.

MINOS

Daedalus, tempt me not further,
Seeing thou diest.

DAEDALUS

Let me die
Speedily, that I see not
That which must come to pass.
Dying, I pray the King
Wager not here his son.

MINOS

How not ?

DAEDALUS

Lest the Oracle
Be sooth, and his son win
A wreath of blood, and himself
A crown of pain.

[MINOS stands in doubt, seeing the man's eagerness.

CHORUS

The whole is not yet told—
The King draweth his breath
With labour between his teeth ;
But the slave is bold, the Avenger bold.

MINOS comes down from his throne and takes
DAEDALUS apart.

MINOS

Thou hast a darker message,
Not yet told. Now tell it.

DAEDALUS

It is revealed, a wrong
Was done to this man's kindred.

MINOS

Fever, belike, in the blood,
Unsubjugate, might sting
Desire.

DAEDALUS

Ah, desire ! Wild heat
In the blood. Heed the Oracle.

MINOS

The Bull's Blood ! What is this ?
Speak, be swift.

DAEDALUS

O King,
The bullish blood is not out,
Nor a bull from the sea redeems us. There
needs
A cut more deep. Earth shall age
Or e'er th' intolerable load
Of the flesh be cast. Ours the blood
Wherewith we drug us the spirit,
Clog up with lime his wings,
Daub him the eyes. O vile,
Servitude base, to achieve
Lust, and devise new lust !
How shall it cease till we cease ?

MINOS

Thou bold in words,
Thou spinner of webs,
How shalt thou mesh me ? What bull's
blood

Have I, save the strain
Immortal of Zeus,
That made glorious my mother
And made Crete glorious ?
Am I not Son of the Bull ?

DAEDALUS (fiercely)

Thou knowest, thou sayest.
What Bull's Blood is there but thine ?
The Goddess foretold it.

[MINOS reels, then strikes down DAEDALUS.]

MINOS

I have the power to slay thee where thou
liest.
Anger me not, lest I stretch
My hand out, and death come down.

DAEDALUS

Death and I, wrestlers, stand
At grips, and I read his eyes
In the hush of pause. Listen, I read
Thy fate, O Minos, in them.

PRIEST

Read thou thine own, and shift
A way from thy trap, Daedalus.

DAEDALUS

To no man is it given to read his fate
Lest, aping God, he strain law's majesty
Which may not set back Doom once fixt.
But at death's point he does foreclose
A partnership, and shares Death's great
design
Ere yet accepted.

Fate, like a sea,
Rises and falls, the same
In difference, immutable. Is there a man
Whose veins the ichor of God
May bear, and not madden, and die
Frenzy-bit? Or can a man
Stand undazzled such light
As rayeth streaming from God?
Can a man, being God, bear with men—
Having God's mast'ry, his haste,
Dreadful splendour ashake on his front—
His motions, his white light,
Unageing youth in old flesh
Weary of sin? O never
Hope that consummation, Minos!
Be man, be God—but not both.
That is denied thee.

[He half rises up, strengthened by his gospel.

Nay, thou unhappy, thou God encaged,
Thou wretched mortal maddened by God,
If thou art God enough for our ruin,

Enough of man to clog thy forehead with
shame,

How shall the God in thy seed
Battle thy sin for thee, man ?

[He looks about him despairingly, then sinks down.

It shall not be. Thou saidst well,
Goddess. Woe upon woe
Till the Bull's Blood be out—
His, this God among men and man among
Gods.

[He points the last words at KING MINOS.

CHORUS (horror-struck)

Gods, Guardians of the earth !
And ye, O nameless Ladies of Dread !
Let not the head
Bow down to the terrible words he said,
Nor accept the monstrous rede.

[They exclaim upon DAEDALUS.

O art thou shameless, wretch ?
Hast thou no knee to bend,
Will thou slander thy friend ?

MINOS

He slandereth God my father ;
He condemneth himself.

Yet I can pause
Before I slay thee. Tell now
Thy warrant for this thou utterest.

DAEDALUS

This is revealed—it shall come to pass
Ere my tired heart sigheth free my breath,
Thy son shall seek him a grave
And funeral rites in vain.

[All are hushed in fear. Then the People pray.

CHORUS

Sea, and our Earth !
O well-loved Earth, do thou be clement,
And thou, O Sea, whose heart is Crete,
Bear thou the young man home
To his father's halls !

[MINOS has recovered himself.

MINOS (to Daedalus)

Thou hast o'er-reached—like a stoat
Biting the trap-teeth that clutch him.
My son is King Aegeus' guest
In Athens, seeking her Olive Crown,
Sunned 'neath her golden arts.
For his high head awaiteth
No shameful end in unconsecrate death—

Him rather Fame like a mantle
 Binds to be one with Honour and Us.

[He turns to the HUNTSMAN.

Comfort thee, seeker of blood-price.

HUNTSMAN

Let blood be paid for the price of blood.
 I ask the full, fair price.

CHORUS

The price of the strong ! Minos is strong,
 Strong as a tower his House !

Rumour without. The PRIEST exclaims, pointing
 with his hand.

PRIEST

Look yonder ! The people !

[All look. The CHORUS voice the general agitation.

CHORUS

See, see, a moving crowd,
 A vext concourse, a multitude
 Spreads from the shore with faces turned
 To greet the flags of the King !

And lo, in the hiving midst,
One breathless, sorely spent,
Struggling with friends, on this hand, on
that,
Stain'd with travel—yet proud content
Lighteth his brows, flames from his happy
eyes—
News, Minos, good news !

A MESSENGER enters with following. The stage fills.
He kneels to MINOS.

MESSENGER

News, Minos, is mine !
The race, the race, the swift steeds,
Glory of Phaestos ! The deeds
Of Androgeos ! Wine—I crave wine,
That I pour libation to all Patrons of Crete !

CHORUS

O ministry of thy feet
Jocund ! O augury
Of great and high Destiny !
Minos, the cup is full !

MINOS

Not in vain didst thou rear the House of
the Bull,
Zeus my father ! Not vain

My quest of Helios, parent of light,¹
 Lord of the light that shone in the flame of
 thy head,
 Pasiphaë, queen and wife,
 Mother of children, blest in thy children's
 life !

[As he names PASIPHAË there is a sudden hush.

CHORUS

Pasiphaë ! where is she ?
 Minotaur ravens—O King, have mercy !

[The PRIEST intervenes.

PRIEST

Praise we the Gods !

[MINOS in ecstasy of pride.

MINOS

The Gods ! I am a God—
 Son of all-seeing Zeus ! See to him, there—
 Give him meat and drink—anooint his feet
 With wine and oil ; heap a shield
 With golden treasure ; let flocks,
 Fatlings and firstlings be his.
 Let his name be glorious, call him

¹ Father also of Pasiphaë.

Augur of Minos ; let his place be set
High at our table, who hailed our son
Olive-crowned, Victor !

[He turns fiercely to DAEDALUS.

Ho, thou
Ill mist, scowling upon us,
Darkener of days, thou boaster !
Gird, twist thy fork, scorpion !
Lo, the World-Disposer,
Disposing of thee, maketh sport
Of thee and thy mumblings there.

Zeus, like a fresh wave,
Brimmeth the harbour bar,
So the dead water, stirring,
Feeleth his might and swims
To th' extreme verge, and life springs
And motion where first was scum.

Too soon, Daedalus, thy claw
Put out, to rake in the heart
Of Crete ! Ah, Attic fox,
Whose eyes shifted and turned,
Devising snares—now hide
In deeper maze thy disaster.

Feed now the jaws thou wouldst feed
With Crete ! Ha, be done with him !
Hale him to Minotaur !

[They seize DAEDALUS, and hold him.

DAEDALUS

O Minos, I am ready. Do thy will.

A state of exaltation in MINOS infects PRIEST and People.

MINOS

As the judgment of Zeus
Is my judgment ; let none
Question or raise finger up—
Till he drink of the cup
Himself hath mixt,
And his doom be done.

PRIEST

Ah, faced as a fox,
Ah, heart of a sheep !
Behold now the fowler
Caught in his net ;
The jester's dry eyes
Aching to weep.

CHORUS

The fall of his pride
Is as Phaëton's.
He sailed far and wide,
His wings were the sun's.
But his cunning belied him,
His art was denied him,
And his sand-glass runs.

DAEDALUS

As the striver washt clean
Of blood and sweat ;
As the bridegroom whose fret
Is o'er, and the bride-chamber set ;
As washt in Callirrhoë's runnel,
Let the Bride not delay—
Even Koré the Queen.

[DAEDALUS is led out by guards.

PRIEST (as Daedalus goes)

Doth fear gripe thee, wretch ?
Art thou little at ease ?
Doth thy nostril 'gin twitch,
Dost thou shake at the knees ?
Lo, the King armed with dominion
Hath struck. Zeus remembers his minion.

CHORUS (more thoughtful)

Tho' I shudder his name,
Yet must I pity
The vials of shame
He endureth, whose city¹
Wears the helmet of fame.

[MINOS cries out in triumph.

¹ Athens, of course.

MINOS

Make now a feast to the Gods, heap high
The altar-floors ! Now let the priests
Whet their blades, let the victims
Smoke on the hundred altars !
Let music shrill—let the strings
Shrill like the wind, and thrill
Our hearts. I, Minos, make
Thank-offering to the Graces !
Ho, bring the blossoming crown,
Crown me ministrant ! Flute-players,
Wind your high music higher,
Make keening melody ! Kindle
Fire upon Ida's brow !

A shadow falls over the city and MINOS falters suddenly.

What now ? Why doth the music
Fade ? Who hideth the sun ?
Who cometh ? Who cometh now ?

CHORUS

Who is this, haggard and wan ?
Who cometh with jaded and weary feet ?

A SECOND MESSENGER stumbles in, and drops at the feet of MINOS.

Who art thou, shadow of sorrow ?

SECOND MESSENGER

Minos, have mercy, have mercy !

MINOS (still exalted)

Mercy is mine to bestow. What is thy need ?

MESSENGER

My need is thine, and this people's, and hers—

The flame-circled Lady, Pasiphaë, Child of the Sun-God.

As before, at PASIPHAË's name there is a movement in the crowd.

CHORUS

Pasiphaë—where is she ?

Lady of terror, and burning and fierce meditation,

Crisping, uncrisping her hands !

[MINOS is still blind in his pride.

MINOS

Stress and anguish are gone. Crete is great,
Free, favoured of Heaven, proud
Of my son !

MESSENGER

Woe for her burden ! Woe too for me !

He looks about him at the people with flowers in their hands, brought for the thanksgiving.

What feast do ye celebrate here ?

CHORUS

New praise for Crete, the Crown of the
Water !

PRIEST

A new crown for the fruit of the Sun-God's
daughter !

MINOS

A new wreath for the brows of the Son of
the Bull !

The second MESSENGER takes up authority—his message making him great.

MESSENGER

Cast down your garlands, put away your
lutes,

Your reed-pipes and your crowns.

Take dust to crown yourselves, shred off

Your tresses, women ; and, ye maids,

Let loose your coiféd hair.

Not for love do it, nor a bridal,
Save Death be bridegroom. Lo !
Ready is Death, sitting hereby in the gate,
Sightless his eyes, fast in hand the dish
Seeking an obol, seeking his toll.
Give him his tribute, Minos, and you,
Crete !

CHORUS (murmuring)

Oh, oh, what is this that he saith ?

MINOS

Hush there, and cease your murmuring.
Speak.

CHORUS

O King, O Daedalus forsook !
O Queen of the fierce blood !

MINOS

Who speaks of them ? The dead are dead.
Daedalus is dead.

[He turns to the MESSENGER.]

Rumour of thee
Ran on before thy breath could frame it.
Empty, therefore, thy phial of woe,
That we may drink it, and live
Like men thereafter.

MESSENGER

Sir, the Athenians
Murmured against thy son,
And at his triumphs murmured. Then
When he, begarlanded and anointed,
Drove home from broad Eleusis
His conquering team, a throng
Of youth, their treacherous eyes
Guarded by linen bands,
Sprang from a thicket, and set
On his company, three to a score !
Critas they slew, Menocles
With stones, and Androgeos, the young
man
Thy son—him they slew and ravaged. Then
tied
His feet, thy son's feet, to the car,
And hued the horses and cried ; and they,
mad
With fear, went headlong in gallop
The dust of the track ; and by terror
Made frantic, leapt the rock rampart,
And fell—
Horses, and car, and hero,
To their end in one red grave.
Now let me die ; for no man
May utter such things and live.

He goes out through a way made by the people, who
fear him. MINOS stands shaking.

CHORUS

O King, the tortured soul of Daedalus
Rises and weeps to see us !

[MINOS stands shaking.

What said that man tormented ?
Spake he not true ? Alas !

PRIEST

The viperous Athenian went
Deathwards, foretelling wretchedness.

CHORUS

Woe to the father, woe to the mother !
Woe to the kindreds of the great House—
The House, the House of the Bull !
Ariadne, Phaedra, woe to ye !

MINOS still shaking, GRAULIS appears from the house, sees the horror on all faces, and comes quickly down. She peers at MINOS, who sees nothing.

GRAULIS

What is it ? What is it ? Quickly !

CHORUS

Knowest thou not ? 'Tis Androgeos—

GRAULIS

Dead ?

CHORUS

Dead. Tell thy mistress—

GRAULIS

She needeth no telling, nor heedeth it.
She is acold, hugging herself.
O Minos, Minos, King of wretchedness,
Hear me and strike me down !

[MINOS pays no heed. The People swarm.

CHORUS

Ha, Gods, ye have not ended. The Queen—

GRAULIS

Dead, Cretans, and well dead,
Seeing this stroke was hers,
Her scheming—and thy agonizing, lord !

PRIEST

The King stands dumb. What hast thou
more ?

GRAULIS

She is dead, but her child liveth—

PRIEST

Her child ?

GRAULIS

Her child. Minotaur.

The CHORUS is shocked to silence. Presently it begins on a hushed note, which grows in volume.

CHORUS

Clamour is round me of sin not to be
named,
Hissed from shooting and hidden lips ;
Hints, intervals of sound,
Sobbing, unrest.
Unrest is worst of all
When the dread powers of the dark
Gather, scream and pass over
As birds on a winter night.
Shriller than birds in a storm,
More vacant, more desolately
Cometh the clamour of sin not to be known !

[With wild hands uplifted.

O haven of Dark, O pluméd night,
Fall on us, blot our name from the light !

And thou, Pasiphaë !

O woman, wrecked and stained,
Is there a shame on earth

Thou hast not borne ? Or woe
Or old inveterate sin
Older, more hard than thine ?
Now no swift hint of love
And honourable things
Can flush thy shameful cheek,
Nor to thy frozen eyes
Bring redemption of tears.

She is cut off in sin's flood-tide. The best
Were silence, the grave, and rest !

MINOS slowly gathers his force and confronts the
HUNTSMAN.

MINOS

I am now old, who a little while
Ago was hardy, and full of blood.
Thou, Stranger, must take thy battle up
With me—unequal war.
For now I have no son.

HUNTSMAN

The price is paid. I ask
No more, nor asked so much.

The HUNTSMAN goes out with bent head. MINOS is
consumed with the rage of despair.

MINOS

There is a price to ask
Of Athens, Gods ! I am King
Of Crete, Minos, the Bull's Son.

Take you a torch, dip it in fire.

One lights a torch. MINOS goes up on the sea-wall
and holds the brand out over the sea.

Hear now, ye Cretans ! Ye men,
And young men, soon to be Cretans,
Ye women, mothers, and all ye virgins
Who look to bear Cretans ! Hear all.

By the blood of my father,
Zeus, by the altars, the hearth
Where his shade dwells ; by Crete,
By her hold of th' inviolate sea,
Athens shall smoke in blood-fray ;
Wailing shall fill her streets,
But no live thing. A voice
Shall she be, a wounded voice.

Yea, like a woman tortured,
Blind and mad, she shall kill
Her children, and smile at stabbing,
Then wake, beat her breast, loathe herself.

But still with wet, cruel hands,
All that she holdeth dear
She shall slaughter with craft malign,
Till not one remaineth, but she—
Moaning, writhing her limbs.

I make war
Henceforth on Athens, that year
By bitter year she shall waste
Her flowers to feed my hate.

By black sails borne they shall come,
In keels bodeful and black ;
And Minotaur feed, so he
May prosper in gluttony,
And we feed with him our hate.

This is the doom of Minos,
Son of Zeus, testified
By this torch, and the fire of it,
Unquenched while Athens stands up.

He stands, the torch shaking in his hand while the
People pray.

CHORUS

Grant, Gods, this doom bear not
Some fatal, double sense,
And so our wreck come thence
Where we had looked to win
A crown. Alas ! man crowned
Remaineth man, his doom
Recoileth often to spring
Back to the doomsman, and he
That judgeth is convict found !

Who is so wise to know himself, to say
To his soul, Thus far 'tis safe for thee, seek not
Beyond thy little hedged ground ?
Who knoweth himself bound,
Or knowing it, accepteth the decree
Which, when it set man free

Of all else, fixed him slave of his own whim,
Tyrant whose subjects soon outmastered
him ?

Such wisdom standeth not with the force we
have :

He only that beareth the brunt of himself is
brave.

II

ARIADNE IN NAXOS

THE ARGUMENT

THE hero THESEUS, having (with the help of ARIADNE, daughter of Minos) slain Minotaur and so freed Athens from the yearly tribute exacted by Crete, sails thence for his own city, taking that same ARIADNE with him for his bride. He had promised King Aegeus his father that he would send a ship before him, with a white sail, if he should have been fortunate, instead of the black sail with which the tribute vessel commonly returned. That, however, he forgot to do ; so that the ship came in bearing the ensign of misfortune. On his homeward voyage THESEUS stays at Naxos, an island of Magic. The God DIONYSUS speaks the prologue.

PERSONS

A MAENAD.

DIONYSUS.

CHORUS OF CRETAN MAIDS.

THESEUS.

ARIADNE.

AN ATHENIAN SAILOR.

THE SCENE

A sandy bight in the shore of the island of Naxos, with the sea at the back. On the right is a grove of plane-trees, in which a stone altar. On the left are rocks and profuse vegetation. The season is the Spring. Flowers abound almost to the water's edge and are to be seen starry beneath the plane-trees. The sky is flawless blue, and the pathway of the sun glitters on the sea.

ARIADNE IN NAXOS

At the opening of the scene the stage is empty, and so remains for a while. Then there is a flash of lightning out of the clear sky, and immediately a thunder-clap, which, after, rolls among the unseen hills. Three figures are now before the scene, as if proceeding from the altar-grove to a thicket on the left. The first is a MAENAD in short, looped-up tunic, and with streaming hair. Her head is thrown back. She carries a thyrsus in one hand, a dead kid in the other. The central figure is DIONYSUS, crowned with ivy, wearing his leopard-skin. He has the semblance of a smooth-faced, ruddy young man of great stature. Behind him is a FAUN, naked to the waist, goat-legged and footed. He has a pan-pipe in his hand.

THE MAENAD

Bacchus is lord of the length and breadth of
the earth,
Red as wine, brighter than honey, ruthless
as rain.
Io ! Zagreus ! Regent of storm and pain !

[She stands rigid, as in ecstasy.

DIONYSUS

From my still haunts of brooding and dreams,
In mortal ceremonies, I come forth
To light on men, and shed over earth
With sleepy spell my will inscrutable,
To this my island, fear-haunted,
Where priests with pious hands and orgy
Call up the dance through wintry nights
And shake the dawn with fire more fierce
 than the sun's,
Fire in the heart ! Here as a mist
Desire-laden, sick with torments
For unused folk, I lie in wait
Glamour to cast through all quiet ways,
Through tangle of briar, thro' drencht
 herbage,
On sundew thick, on restless floods,
On scarred mountain-flanks, on the crannies
 in them,
Peering for me like eyes.

O'er the mad earth then, through leagues of
 air,
I pass to men's dwellings and steep their
 blood
With hinted joy and bliss surmised,
Seasonal raptures, such wild love
As only in dreams men know with women.
So like the beasts, filled with me,

Headlong speeding, frenzy-gathered,
Mouthing they fall, torn by their longing,
Indiscriminate, prone, posset ;
And my hot breath blows and passes,
Blows over and passes, and leaves them
swooning.

For not as the high Gods,
Not as the great Twelve
On hoar Olympus throned and pure,
Am I whose dam, the pale wife,
Semelé, casting mortal love
On her fruited womb, cast human tinge
On me her fruit, with grief acquainted.
Grief of a God, past human thought,
Is mine, and Desire, desire of a man
Shared with that earth whereof she was—
Bound thereby to desire and pain.
I am the Earth, its longing, its torment,
Flood of the spring, summer drouth,
Fall's foreboding, dearth of winter :
These am I. Lo ! and I move
Swift in the blood ; for in my dreams
Virgins unsex, men in stress,
Huddling as herds, run to their woe,
Till passion dies, and they reach the end of
desire,
Boundless oblivion, dreamless sleep.
So I watch, croucht like a beast,
At this first shrilling call of the year
To utter myself, and to be.

Not long—for Theseus, the great captain,
In triumph turning from perils past—
From Minotaur sent shaggy with blood
With his dead to mingle—homing to Athens,
Wedded with her, the fast-girdled
Soft Ariadne, loving and loved,
Calleth here : whom now I await
In trembling thicket, with eyes agleam,
To bend her body to work my will ;
Drive my desire to burn in her blood,
Make of her heart my love's wild garden.
Press on, press on, abide we the hour !

He bends his head to his breast and points forward with his rod. The procession streams on and disappears. The CHORUS presently come in through the altar-grove : young girls in Cretan garb. They sing the Parabasis, turning their faces as they move round about to where they look for THESEUS to come.

CHORUS

Not upon us, Athenian, not upon us
Despair sits darkling, nor sweet Hope
From us hath folded her away
While now the Morning, golden-zoned,
Streams thro' the gateways of the east.
This is the holy hour, it hath
Cooling influence of dew,
Gentle airs, remembered sleep,
Promise of day renewed !

THESEUS appears, and stands at the edge of the grove, leaning upon his spear. They lift up their hands, hailing him.

Great deeds have I seen,
Glory hath blinded me
Till I know not Crete, nor bewail
The light of my father's house,
Nor the pleasant pastures of Ida.
Behold, they are past as a bird's cry in the
 night,
Suddenly ! Yet I look up
Trustful, as women trust in the eyes of a man.

When for the sword and the battle
The murderous beast's ire
Availed him not ; when he fell—
Minotaur !—and the shout
Rang thro' the streets, " We are free !
Crete is free ! " Then I knew
A man was come : and I saw him,
Theseus, tamer of men, crowned with his
 deed !

Ariadne, the fair-browed maid,
Wealth and pleasure of Crete,
Saw him, how goodly and wise ;
Kneeled, set his foot on her neck,
Master and lord of her life ;
Bowed her, yielded ; and I—
I too—fell where she fell,
Claspt his knees where she claspt,
Past with her to the ship ;
Stood looking steadfast upon him launcht on
 the deep !

For the Gods, splendid on thrones,
 The far-seeing Gods are his friends :
 Zeus, Poseidon the Girdler,
 Wise Demeter—they stayed him,
 Upheld, threatening the sea.
 Grey-eyed Pallas, the War-Maid,
 Artemis shrill as the wind,
 Phoebus the death-dealer,
 Yea, all the deathless, the Twelve
 Smiled his going forth his fortunate way.

Shall I not serve, being glad,
 Unmindful, Dicté, of thee ;
 Forgetting the breathings of Ida
 Whose cypresses hush down the voice ?
 Shall I remember the Sisters whiter than
 snow
 Where Cydonia shoulders the sea ?
 Nay, but the pastures of Crete and upland
 places
 Are still, hid in death and the dark ;
 And I choose for the light thou bearest, tamer
 of men !

[They stand all about THESEUS, adoring.

THESEUS

Daughters of Minos, pluckt from Crete,
 Chaplet for Athens, or a wreath
 For her smooth brows ! me now so near
 My crown the Gods have furthered.

And Athens, not remote
Nor slow to welcome, ere two suns,
Shall light your careful eyes,
Wash pure your tear-worn cheeks
To redden ; for soon our sail
Blown ripe to round the peak
Of Salamis shall strain,
And soon the bankéd oars
Shall grip the tide, and our hearts
Inhale the generous air,
And our eyes the Violet Crown.

Yet seeing 'twas willed in Heaven
Out of the calm a salient wind
With moaning music should stir
The surge against our oars,
Should fling the prow of the ship
To seethe his hair in the vast
Recurring waves, and in foam
Sluice them, we fled before it
Hither to Naxos, here to stay us ;
And hence, yest'reen,
When the long roaring wind had swooned
And a light breeze ruffled the sea,
Naucritas sped I, Leucippus,
With news of our coming, redeemed,
To Aegeus, King and Father—
Father of Athens, father of me and the
people.

Hence now we too shall set
Sail, and win back our peace
Ere once more Helios faint.

CHORUS I

I reck not Crete, but to win thy land !

CHORUS II

What land hath a woman but her lord ?

CHORUS III

And who is her lord but he that is strong
And masterful, even as thou art ?

THESEUS

Fear not at all
Cold welcome, maidens, fear not at all.

Beneficent the Gods we hallow ; there
Clemency reigneth, and Justice
Reigneth, and stately Measure,
High-ordered Temperance, Piety,
Laborious Peace ! For their ends
I took the shift ; Pallas armed me
And strung me to steel for the grim
Grapple with Minotaur,
Seven years a coil for our necks.
No more : he is fallen, is fallen !
Our days loom large, without end.

CHORUS

O come ! We delay.

THESEUS

Nay, first

Smooth Ariadne, offering
Milk and new-pressed wine,
From Artemis seeketh her pledge—
From that pitiful, that benign
Maid that mothereth babes—
A pledge of our love's sweet graft,
Seeing how she is raised
High above maids, as her worth
Challenged us, proving it.

CHORUS

A worthy wife ! Worthy of thee !
'Twas thou felled Minotaur,
'Twas she gave thee the way.

THESEUS

The clew was hers that did win me
Forth from the miry ways
Of error writhing to err,
Thickened with drip of mist,
Fat with the reek of bones
And fretting members of men.
Through all the toils devised
By all-wise Daedalus—
Trap for his terror, trap for himself—
She brought me by sweet craft
And wit ; wherefore I praise her.
I praise her, and crown her mine.

CHORUS

See, see, she cometh.
O new-made, fortunate wife !
O girdle happily loosed !
O virgin made mother, O bride !

ARIADNE comes gladly from the grove. She is flushed and joyful, and comes to THESEUS with worship. She stands at first looking upon him, her message in her eyes.

THESEUS

What hast thou ? It is well ?

ARIADNE

Well. It is well with me.

THESEUS

What hast thou, looking upon me ?

ARIADNE

Loving, I look where I love.

THESEUS

Thou smilest. Thy cheek's fresh rose
Speaketh.

ARIADNE

Good augury !

THESEUS

What then ?

ARIADNE

My new joy !
My King's gift : for my bosom a jewel,
For my brows a crown ; for thy house
A son ; honour for me.

[She lifts up her arms, glorified. THESEUS clasps her.

THESEUS

Now praise all Gods for pride
Of life !

CHORUS

Now serve all Gods !
Fill altar-cups, strew corn,
Cast branches. Serve them so.

THESEUS

They look benignantly
On men who lust on life,
Who carve their own fate out.

CHORUS

Alas for women ! For they
Lack force for fate.

THESEUS

Look they
To husband's thews for a sword.

CHORUS

Nay, meekness serves them, and prayer.

THESEUS

Pray then. I stand upright.

[ARIADNE, in his arms, touches his chin.

ARIADNE

Pray yet for thy son, O Theseus.

[He laughs as he kisses her.

THESEUS

Pray thou ! My prayer is made
In sword-stroke and bloody doing
Wrought for the land, to rid it
Of plague, clamour, red envy,
Hatred, malice : I serve
Men, and so serve God best.

ARIADNE

Some serve by wrath, and some
By love. Love is humbleness
And boundless giving. And joy
Cometh of other joy.

[She quits his arms.

I go to give thanks to God
For the joy I carry in me.

CHORUS

O excellent in woman
To bend the knee, yet in spirit
To outsoar the falcon, mate the blue
Starry dwelling of Zeus !

THESEUS

Go pay thy service, for ere the sun
Be at high noon we seek the ship.

ARIADNE

Bending my knees, I am gone.

She goes into the grove. The CHORUS grow thoughtful. Some look anxiously about, some whisper together ; all keep within touch. So presently they turn to THESEUS.

CHORUS

Thou prayest not, O hero !

THESEUS

I have prayed by stroke of sword.

CHORUS

Yet a God, they say, dwelleth hereby
Should have thy worship.

THESEUS

Thy God !
Name him. What slim, sleek lad ?

CHORUS I

Hush ! For I name him not.

CHORUS II (whispering)

The Son of Semelé !

CHORUS III

The Son of blinding Zeus !

CHORUS IV

Nurtured by wild-eyed nymphs !

CHORUS V

Nurtured with blood for milk !

CHORUS I

Bright as wine ! Sanguine bright !

CHORUS II

Him of the gleaming shoulder !

CHORUS III

Him of the wet skin
Pluckt reeking from the fawn,
Clinging about him !

THESEUS

Bacchus !

CHORUS

Hush ! For we name him not.

THESEUS

But I name him, O women !
Shame and deep shame upon ye.

Here is no God for maidens to seek
To grace the bed for a bridal.
Seek Pallas rather, the virgin grave,
Seek rather the Huntress, the Shining One,
Whom Ariadne now decks with prayer.

Loud praises the Evian hath—but not yours.

CHORUS

Oh, but this murmurous God
Potency hath and dread !
Here chiefly to be feared.

THESEUS

Seek ye the bride, lift with her
Your arms. Hers climb to the sun.

CHORUS

Would that thine clomb, O son of Aegeus,
with hers !

THESEUS

Nay, let her love work wonders for me !
For love is mighty, where force not availeth.

CHORUS

Ay, love is mighty, envied of Gods.

THESEUS

Well may they grudge ! for what have they
To venture against the dear joy,
The warm-mouthed welcome of wife and
child ?

CHORUS

Beware lest they mar that peace,
From husband's arms snatch wife, from
mother
Ravish the babe. Beware, Theseus !

THESEUS

Quaking hearts, foolish talk—
Here in this sunlit place !

[He reclines at ease.

After the dust of battle,
From the puddled earth new-risen,
Shaking the old turmoil
From his clotted hair, and the sweat
From haggard eyes, the hero
Lies his length, and his head
Sinks to the fragrant lap of his wife !
She fills the mead-cup, crowns him
With flowers, anoints his feet,
Poureth oil in his wounds,
With her hands ministereth !
Who shall deny him ? What God ?
I having fought, having prevailed, so crave
her,
So claim her, await her. So, even now,
I could sleep, for in this mild air
Is sweetness wooing to dreams.

CHORUS I

I sense the mystery all about—
Ah, me !

CHORUS II

Ah, Lord !

CHORUS III

Who cometh ?
Who stealeth down the wind ?

CHORUS IV

What riot is rife in the air ?

THESEUS

Dimness assaileth me. What is this ?
What thick sense, what languor of limbs ?
What fumes of dropping wine ?

CHORUS V

Virtue like that of hidden wine
Stealing at dusk from the wine-vat.

[THESEUS rises to his knees in wonder.

THESEUS

In a day the spring has leaped ! It is here !

CHORUS

Virtue is in him of new wine.

THESEUS

Ah, but that wine was sweet
Supt at the bridal ! Sweet was the chant

Of them by the wreathed Hermes fast by the
door !

Frolic the feast was, burning the bride,
Hiding her shame to be so desired !
But here is sterner joy—in spilt blood,
In clash of men, shock of horses,
In shouting, clamour, pressing of spears !
Man against man——

[A hush falls. The sun is hidden.

CHORUS

Hush ! Hush all ! He is here.

THESEUS

Who then ?

CHORUS

Our lord.

THESEUS

What lord ?

CHORUS

The nameless, many-named.

THESEUS

Then is salvation nearer than at first.

DIONYSUS appears with MAENAD and FAUN. THESEUS rises, but never looks at him throughout the scene.

DIONYSUS

Loosed bonds for the encompassed I bring.

CHORUS

O full of sleep and dreams !

DIONYSUS

Beneficent my spells upon men,
Dreams out of wine, panoplied dreams,
Conquest, empery, ventures wild
In ruinous places, on high seas
Unsailed before. Who follows me
Forsakes wife, children, father's house,
Enthusiast become,
Endues the fawnskin, grasps the rod,
Runs glad the riot. Followest thou me ?

THESEUS (trembling)

Lord, I am plighted, my father awaits.

DIONYSUS

Know thou no father but mine.

THESEUS

He forbend ! I have plighted troth.

DIONYSUS

Great deeds are stored for thee—
Rending of nations, renown in Achaia.

THESEUS

Ay, I feel it !

DIONYSUS

For thee

The shriek of men falling, for thee the spears,
The shouting, the captives, acclaim. For
thee

Hippolyta Queen of scarred Maeotis
Arrested her fate ; thee Heracles,
Alcmena's son, awaits even now
To beckon lord of Athens. Yea,
Adventurous beyond all men,
To Hades shalt thou go, and see
Passion-pale Koré, the dead—then come
To lord it in Athens. Thee, Theseus,
Athenian King, I urge to thy fate,
Breathing upon thee thus with my mouth

[He breathes upon THESEUS, who trembles.

Breathing thus again upon thee——

THESEUS shudders and sways, then lifts up with a
battle cry.

THESEUS

Ho, for the battle ! Ho, for the ship !

DIONYSUS

Thus breathing again, and thus.

THESEUS resists no more, but looks doglike, panting at his master.

CHORUS

See, he trembles ! Each hot breath
Flushes him darker, beside himself.

DIONYSUS

I shake thee with my breath.

THESEUS

It encompasseth as a fire,
Floodeth my temples, beateth
The balls of my eyes.

[He strides forward, shaking his head.

CHORUS

Risen great and grim,
The son of Aegeus looketh
Wildly upon me, muttering.

DIONYSUS (in a voice like a trumpet)

Theseus, King,
Girded with war-gear,
Seeketh his mates
By the black ships ;
Raiseth the chant,
The chant of oarsmen ;
Crowdeth sail
For the open water.

[THESEUS sways about, holding his spear.

THESEUS

Am I not King ?
Shall I forbear me
To seize the spear, to cry the battle
Shrill among men ? Let all men know
Me leader, adventurous,
Not war-sated, by love not filled,
Rather in battle seeking my food !

CHORUS

Alas, what wilt thou ? Alas for us !
And for her, the bride !

THESEUS

O thou that settest desire and pain
To rend a man, by these thy gifts
Upon me now, hear ! By the sword

I draw I renounce my former estate,
And driven by tempest, mad with the fever
Gotten of thee, harsh as a squall,
With no look back, nor thought, I fling me—
Heading the spearmen stark to havoc.

[The CHORUS impede him.]

CHORUS

Stay, lord, have pity
On her thy chosen mate !
Lo, we are women, daring
Woman's extreme fate !

THESEUS

Trouble me not, for the God,
Giver of fire, is upon me.
Battle ! The sword is out !

CHORUS

Alas for her, with a bleeding heart,
Lonely, passioning to her death !

THESEUS

Athené claims me—brail up the mast—
Cry you, A Theseus, ho ! Battle is joined !
Bacchus is lord of the earth, God above
Gods—
Bacchus !

DIONYSUS

Time is.

THESEUS

Hailing thee thus, I go.

The procession goes forward, THESEUS, with bent head, stumbling before it as if he was driven. The CHORUS in great agitation hold out their arms to him. Presently they see the ship take the sea. Then they tell fiercely the tale after their manner.

CHORUS I

He bared his eyes ; with unstaying feet
For the foam-bitten shore
He hastened, hounded to fate.
Soon shall the sails cover the fleet,
The sea flash to the freight,
The pulse and thresh of the oars.
Man born of a woman, winged, outsoars
The hawk's flight ; falleth then and outpours
His eager estate !

CHORUS II

The Olympian breath'd upon him ; the hero,
 blind,
Drave where he led
As a ship whose helmsman is gone.
Yea, as a ship curst by the wind
He went out muttering, wan ;
He spake not, turned not his head.

Where is love's chaplet ? 'Tis faded, 'tis
dead !

Woe to the spousals, the desolate bed,
The heart of stone !

CHORUS III

Man born of a woman, purposeful, bound,
Lifteth his eyes
To the wild splendour of God,
Dazzled. The earth he loveth, her sound
Of reed-music, her load
Of beauty, of ecstasies.
How shall he dare the terrors, the mysteries,
The silence, the brooding, the still surprise,
The awful Abode ?

CHORUS IV

Woman that liveth to trust and to cling,
Being forsworn,
Choketh the tears as they start ;
Masketh her passion, traileth her wing
As a bird, grieveth apart,
Tearless, voiceless, forlorn.
Laughter and speech hath she for love ; but
to mourn,
Sighs, and labouring bosom, and shorn
Hair, and dead heart.

CHORUS V

And this is her lot, she boweth her knees,
Yieldeth her limbs,
Giveth her candour, her untrodden soul
Into thy keeping, O Man ; for lordship she
sees
Throned in thy brows, and control.
Lit by thy favour she swims
Sunned in thy smile, rapt in hymns
Hymeneal, glorious in dreams
Golden and whole !

CHORUS VI

Whenas the battle, the lust of war,
Smell of the sea
Drive thee abroad, she cannot gainsay
Thy purpose, O Man, but afar
Setting her eyes to the day,
She bendeth her knee.
Hope against hope ! for the God is in thee ;
Blood-fever, the fury that houndeth the free
Have thee their prey !

CHORUS

The high Gods drive us whither they will,
Humble our knees,
Lure to ruin and sin ;
Whelm us, spurn us, madden and kill ;

Crave us belike, net and fasten us in,
Launch us on desolate seas.
Power they have to possess, but not to
 appease
Desire upon us ; power to raven at ease—
But to love ! Ah, no, not so !

CHORUS I

Love ! That is ours. That have we
From our kind, not Godkind.

CHORUS II

Ay, we fear God, love man.

CHORUS III

Alas, sisters, who would love man !
See where she cometh alone with her joy—
With mirthful step !

[ARIADNE comes in quickly.]

ARIADNE

Be glad with me
O women ! and be glad, thou Earth,
And skyey vault, and amorous clouds
That hang about the sun ! And you,
Ye birds ! O hills, lift up your heads !
Let all clear streams dance like my heart !

And thou, Maid Artemis,
Patroness of the pure,
Come thou to earth and me !

[The CHORUS cry to their Goddess.

CHORUS I

O come, O come, Desirable !

CHORUS II

O Lady, come !

CHORUS III

Succour us now !

CHORUS IV

Pity us now !

CHORUS V

She pitieth none !

CHORUS VI

O hidden Gods, whose name may not be
spoken,
This grows a sombre day that opened so
fair !

ARIADNE

What mean ye, comrades? What chill
shade
Shall pass between my love and me?

CHORUS I

Fate's way. We smile in our sleep,
Anon the Furies beat their wings
Wide, and we weep.

ARIADNE

Talk ye so to a bride? Talk ye so?
[One points out to sea.]

CHORUS II

The sail! The Dragon climbeth the sea.

ARIADNE

Ships pass; and soon shall ours be
Like snow upon hyacinth.

CHORUS III

The sky will weep for that snow.

CHORUS IV

Herald of wailing women.

CHORUS V

Herald of bruised breasts.

ARIADNE (sobered)

'Tis true, clouds gather for rain.

CHORUS VI

Rain ! Ay, of tears for love forsworn !

ARIADNE

Shall I weep ? Shall I weep ? With my
hope
Proud like the swelling wheat ?

CHORUS I

Black with blight is thy goodly grain,
Widowed art thou, to kindred not yet un-
veiled.

ARIADNE

My heart is crying. Heed it not.
I am trembling. Look not at me.

CHORUS II

The Dragon drives not alone.

ARIADNE

Where is Theseus ? Where is my lord ?

CHORUS III

The godlike Theseus——

CHORUS IV

Godlike in this
That he is stark and cruel——

CHORUS V

Is gone !
He is gone—nor ship nor hero for thee.

[A pause of shock.

ARIADNE

Heed not my crying, heed not me.
I am foolish—but speak to me.

CHORUS VI

A God bent down
Through the air from his seat on high,
Hither upon thy lord ; and he breathed
Furious breath on his eyes, and kindled
A fire in him, which he fanned to flame,
To leap and encompass his soul, his honour,
His joy and pity, all the man

He was and might be. So then thy lord,
Filled with a frenzy, fever of blood-thirst,
Drave, blundering, out to the ship,
Stammering "Bacchus! Battle is joined!
A Theseus, ho!" and rushed to the ship—
And they pushed out to sea.

CHORUS III

Nor shalt thou see his eyes again.

CHORUS IV

Nor he thine in thy son.

[ARIADNE stands as one dazed.

ARIADNE

The sun is darkened. Let us too go.

CHORUS IV

Whither?

ARIADNE

I know not. My heart aches.

She sits down, stiffly and strangely, as if out of her wits.

CHORUS

Better by far had death,
That stooping like a vulture clutcht
Alcestis to his haunt among the shades

Across the coiling waters, and beneath
The flowery crust of earth did lay her,
Wrapt for sacrifice as in long folds
Of priestly mantle, or golden prayer—
Better, I say, that thou wert with the dead
Folded, in expectation of no change.

CHORUS II

Thou that wast wife, as widow must set to
the shears
The flow of thy tresses,
Cast them a golden shower to the lap of the
earth ;
Fold in a shroud thy head, thy shell-pink
ears,
Hide the crystalline sweet of thy limbs which
the light caresses,
Loving thee well ; veil thee from sight,
Black as the raven, black as the heart of the
storm, black as the night !

[ARIADNE cries over the sea.

ARIADNE

The dead wind lags, and even now
All noontide lays her spell on the sea,
And on Theseus, stretcht his length
Upon his lionskin, sole on the poop,
Watching Naxos—and lo !
Her hills like barrows that mark a grave,
And love and honour buried there !

What thought hankering bleacheth his hair,
Feedeth upon his brow? What ruth?
Sighs he for me, or needs me? Alas!
Alas, that from the bed
Of grey Tithonus thou littest, thief,
To laugh on Crete the day I first lookt
On him, my moonbeam, maddening me!
Was ever maid curst so by a man?

Curst! Nay, I was blest
Beyond all maids born when I knew
For one hour I was his, he mine!
Blest beyond reach of Gods,
Or tearing of fierce Moerae;
With fire-tinct memories stored,
Deep as the sea, and as clear—
To flush my temples, and beat
In my blood till I die!

Agitation has stolen into the CHORUS, who have become restless, attentive to distant sound.

CHORUS

The far-off murmur of wailing, voices intoned,
Shrilling exultant, sobbing to rest, but anon
Borne on a gust of wind sudden and fierce,
Thrust rude on our ears.
Swooning now, it is gone!
Yet like the feeble flux of a falling tide
Cometh the shadow of days bygone
And the salt savour of tears.

[ARIADNE looks to her lap.

ARIADNE

O thou dear seed !
O tender shoot, in whose blood
Is the streak Erechthean,
The grain of thy sire !
Honoured shall I be, harbouring thee,
Blesséd my breasts that give thee meat !

[The CHORUS are beside themselves.

CHORUS

Soon shall be music, high delirium,
Sobbing music, high procession !
Life is heavy with fate too big to be borne ;
Fury shall enter, darkness gather possession ;
Dreaming shall follow on woe, for anguish
remission !

ARIADNE

What sing ye ? What is your song ?
Have ye not that to give me the grace of
tears ?

CHORUS I (jerking)

I know not. But where hath been
Dejection, Madness enters the tilth
New broken, and sows a seed.

CHORUS II (inspired)

War is on earth of God against God !
This is the harbourage favoured of one
Subtly sweet, terribly strong.
Guard thee the guile of his tongue,
Beware the cloudy abode
Of Bromius, wilful and young.

CHORUS III (wildly)

The God of the flame, the God of the torch !
The God of Chorus, the vintage, loosing of
hair,
Theban Iacchus !

CHORUS IV

Storm in his eyes !

CHORUS V

Fire sits eating his eyes, buffets his wing !

CHORUS VI

Bacchus is King !

CHORUS I

Even so, come, on the breath of the spring,
Come, Bacchus, our King !

[ARIADNE rises.]

ARIADNE

Are ye wise, women, are ye wise ?

CHORUS II

Yea, for my wisdom issues
Darkly ; my lips have words from on high.
I know he is near.

CHORUS III

Fear him, fear !

ARIADNE

Nay, but I fear him not.
Who stoopeth to strike the stricken ?

CHORUS IV

Belike—O dreamer, O dreamful !
Belike stooping with words
Silky as balm, he will lighten thy load.

CHORUS V

The fawnskin, the thyrsus, O come !
Hark ! Hark !

CHORUS VI

The winding of flutes—
Padding feet in rhythmical dance !

CHORUS I

As herds to the water, advance—
Come, for Bacchus is near !

[They circle about ARIADNE who stands perplexed.

ARIADNE

What is your speech ? I know not.
Whom sing ye so shrilly ?

The CHORUS now in wild excitement run about and
urge one another.

CHORUS I

Again the riot, the passion, the beating
Of wings in the void, the rapture, the greeting
Of shadowy forms and vast !

CHORUS II

Bacchus !

CHORUS III

Numbed are the senses, the horror is past !
Mountain calleth to mountain, deep unto
deep !

CHORUS II

Bacchus, O Bacchus !

CHORUS IV

Sleepers, awake ! Nymphs of the grove,
Nereids, reedy and still, shiver and move
Your white arms as I move !

CHORUS V

I feel the God ! I am mad with light.

CHORUS II

Bacchus, Bacchus, Iacchus !

CHORUS VI

It is thou, it is thou, Giver of Fire !

CHORUS II

Bacchus, Bacchus, Iacchus !

CHORUS I

Nymph-beloved, it is thou, the myriad-named,
Thou, born in Thebae, shameless, unshamed,
God of the vine, God of the lyre !

CHORUS II

Bacchus, Bacchus, Evoë !

[DIONYSUS appears with the MAENAD.]

DIONYSUS

Mine, Ariadne, now, by day and by night.

[The CHORUS offer themselves to him madly.

CHORUS I

Lord, I am thine !

CHORUS II

And I !

CHORUS III

And I !

CHORUS IV

Lord, we follow——

CHORUS V

Ah, lord, take me !

ARIADNE

Who art thou, lord ?

CHORUS

Bacchus named, lord of the earth !

DIONYSUS

Hail to the chosen bride !
Hail to thee, loved and sought by a God,
Anointed thus with my breath
Upon bosom and brows, upon mouth and
 eyes,
Softer shed than dew on the grass,
Lighter than gossamer, calling thee hence,
Ariadne, to follow desire
Whither I lead.

Speaking, he breathes upon her, bending down over
her where she kneels.

CHORUS

We toil in thy track through thicket and
 hollow,
Over the rocky steep of the mountain,
Through the marish and salt lagoon,
Through bramble and briar, over the dune,
Through harsh bent grass bitter with wind
 from the sea.
Fire aches in our blood, to thrust a way
 through—
Ah, we madden, we die !

DIONYSUS

Mine, mine, O much-beloved !

ARIADNE

Not thine, not mine, but only his
Who made me matron suddenly,
An untried virgin, very young.

CHORUS

Nay, he hath terrible eyes,
His force is a force of rain,
Irresistibly soft,
Fretting the rock, gnawing the plain
With furrow deeper than plough in the croft.

ARIADNE

Shameful your song. Ill it beseems
Ye drive me, burdened so heavily !
And thou ! Oh, be merciful,
Take not my grief from me !

Look on me, I am piteous,
My strength is gone, and my garner of years
May waste ere the sheaf be added
Should win me sight of my lord
In his son. If haply my prayer
Hath flitted in vacant wind
About her shrine, or if she,
My Goddess, holdeth aloof,
Thou wilt have pity, and leave us
Hand in hand, grief and I,
Bosom-mates. Thou that didst grieve

Mortal mother, who died
Of too clear sight of her joy—
Semele's son, pity thou me,
Mother and mortal !

CHORUS

Idle thy prayer ! He is here,
Desirous.

ARIADNE

If I abate
Ever so much as the breadth of a hair
From virgin estate,
Vow'd to my lord, how shall I dare
Wash the tears from my body to make me
fair
When he calleth me home to be mate ?
Now, Demeter, aid me, and bear
My feet, slipping to fate !

Ah, lord, thou art great !
Lore of dark wisdom is thine, thy blood
Kindles desire for fulness of life.
I look to thine eyes, as into water, where
strife
And clamour lie drowned, and still creatures
brood,
Watching the ebb and flow of thy mood :
Look not so ! thine eyes are as wells !

CHORUS

Lord, that Pentheus the King
Fought to his wreck and the woe of his
house ;
That hurled him red to the teeth of his foes—
Agavé, wife, and old Cadmus, father and
king,
Tore, mangled his limbs,
Driven by thee to the dark, terrible thing :
Little she deems
Her end who battles with God !

ARIADNE

Take off from me the glamour of thine eyes,
For thus to witch me is pitiful.
Regard me not—thou'lt kill me !

DIONYSUS

Mine, mine, by day and night.

CHORUS

He smileth on her, his mouth is bright,
Keen as the wind of the north with frosty bite,
And the burning of frost—
She reels, faints, and is lost.

ARIADNE (wailing)

Yea, irredeemably lost
In the shrouds of thee !

Folded, carried away
By foe too stealthy and swift.
Drowning, I care not lift
Hands, I care not to pray—
Only I hymn thee, looser of toils,
Swift Saviour, whom sin and the coils
Of flesh never gainsay.
Washt clean in thy waters, I take new birth,
Hailing thee lord of the length and breadth
of the earth.

MAENAD

Dark as wine, ruthless as rain—
Io, Zagreus, regent of storm and pain !

DIONYSUS

Come, O thou heavy-laden, behold
In me all grieving drowned.

CHORUS

Trembling in all her limbs, but not for fears,
Rather for lassitude of pain ;
Seeking with eyes all blotted dim with tears
Her soul's peculiar food ;
Lagging as flower dissipate by rain
That faints to feel the sun,
She gathers up her sorrow in a flood
And heaps it on thee—and the strife is done.

ARIADNE (to the Maenad)

Let there be mystic dance and procession ;
unbind

My hair that it float on the wind.

Loose ye my girdle, sister, let me go free

For my lord's pleasure of me.

So—I throw my head back, so feel I the
God

In my veins. The blossoming rod
Into my hand give ye !

[The MAENAD has now approached her for the rite.

Io, Bacchus, lover of Chorus,

Tragic, dark, inscrutable one !

Rapt lead I the dance, my blood

Leaping to thine. O master of me,

Catch the sob in my throat with a kiss, and
seal me to thee !

MAENAD

Io ! The lord of lights and glooms goeth on !

They pass out in procession. The CHORUS dance the Bacchic hymn, which varies with each singer. Between each strophe there is dancing, which is heralded by the emotion expressed in the verse.

CHORUS I

Let us fly to the hills and thyme-haunted
places,

Revel is on us ; he goadeth us on !

Kindle the pine-stem, snatch the thyrsus,
Lift shrill song
With wailing of flutes, scream of the pipes :
Stamp ye your feet
Rhythmically as the mad drums beat—
Bacchus, Bacchus, Iacchus ! We drift in the
 throng
Of the lightfoot fauns, nymphs bright-
 breasted and young,
With hair afloat and giving of tongue—
We are thy dogs, hounding the day !

[Dance.]

CHORUS II

Thou that feedest on prayer,
Worshipt with sobs at Eleusis,
Where the Mystae fall to their faces,
Lie with dust on their hair !
Clear call the priests, wail the priestesses
Thrilled by thee—thy might
Fills the vast : they stumble, run to and
 fro
As drunken, reeling they go
Whither they know not, astray
Into the night !

[Dance.]

CHORUS III

Like as the wounded deer,
Limping adown the valley,
Pants for the quiet hidden streams,

Yet stays her not, nor slacks her limbs,
White fear doth gripe her wholly ;
So labouring we long
For haven in our pain,
The patter of the rain,
The volume of the storm without our
wattled home !
So labouring go we on
Burdened with thee,
And bruise thy fruit against our lips,
And let the drips
Of wine-vats sluice our brows and aching
sense eclipse.

[Dance.

CHORUS IV

Lord of the choric strain,
Darkly oracular,
We search thy face in vain,
Thy lips for any sign
Or soothful or benign
Of any solace for our burning scar ;
Seeking thee from afar,
From howling seas stormy with winter war,
From where the windy, frozen caverns arc,
We struggle southward in a broken line,
Swallows wide-scattered, seeking the south—
And lo ! the sun lays bare thy mocking
mouth !

[Dance.

CHORUS V

More cruel than women fatal unto men,
Aeaeon Circe or the Ogygian queen,
Of beauty yet more fell and ruinous !
Thee when Zeus garnered in his mighty
thigh
He fostered delicate poison, and willed us die
That hungered. And thy savour maddened
us,
Who kissing thee again found death more
piteous.

[Dance.]

CHORUS VI (pointing)

Break off, for the sun shineth on high,
And the God returneth
And all the blue world yearneth
To the spell of his beaming eye !

Ah, see in what lovely wise
With soft arms intertwined
And head to ruddy neck reclined,
The dream-God leads our dreaming one !
Her eyes
Upward search the fathomless
Depth unutterable of his—
Come, let us greet her, glozed with mysteries.

DIONYSUS comes back, with ARIADNE clinging to him,
embraced with his arm.

DIONYSUS

Laugh for gladness, O be blithe,
Open thy lips and give me words
Comfortable, that thy man might have,
Whispering utter faithfulness,
Joy in yielded strength of him.
Chatter as she whose love is ripe,
Whose heart and his as petals of flowers
Cling together, ensheathing so
That heart they two have conceived as one.
Speak so to me whom thou hast so loved,
Drowning in me thy conquered grief—
Speak, Ariadne, speak, my bride !

[She pores upon his face and clasps him wildly.

ARIADNE

Let me see thy face, let me touch thy hair,
Hold thee in arms—closer, closer !
Touch me, touch me, love me close—
Now let thy heart beat attune with mine—
Kiss me long—ah !

[She releases him.

No man art thou,
But God who maketh me faint
With love that like hungry flame
Leapeth and licketh my heart,
And knoweth no rest for fear that it die !

It consumeth me as a feverish night.
It passeth like fire on the hearth,
It runneth about, roareth on high,
Shaketh down ash, raveneth still,
Mastereth me, giveth no peace—
Nay, I must die of this love !

DIONYSUS

Love I gave thee—owest thou nothing ?

ARIADNE

Whither thou goest, I go.

DIONYSUS

What hast thou yet that I have not ?

ARIADNE

Nothing. Thou hast me all.

DIONYSUS

Grudgest thou this our joy ?

ARIADNE

Joy ? Had I joy of thee ?
Joy ? Do I grudge thee such joy ?

Nor grudge, nor wish otherwise.
Thou camest, a flare of light—

Blinded, I fell asleep
And dreamed of subtle and lovely things.

DIONYSUS

Lovely ! And thou so lovely !
So loved—and so unloving !
I know what I have won, and what lost.

ARIADNE

Thou hast won all.

DIONYSUS

Thy heart ?

ARIADNE

I have no heart. That is dead.

DIONYSUS

God giveth life. As God
Bent I in love upon thee,
Pouring my breath like new wine
Into thy mouth.

ARIADNE

As mortal
I bowed to immortal God.

DIONYSUS

Ranked in the clouds, seeing, not seen,
Carven in beauty, sit the high Gods,
In a white row, serene and cold ;
Holding each in his hand
The strings of life and destiny ;
Having their will for law,
Seeing life as a tale told,
Far from earth and its quiet recesses.

The dusty orb of the earth,
Darkling and smouldering,
Spinning below their sacred zone
Of pure light, hangeth and swingeth
Barred from doom by Charter, and free
For sorrow or mirth.
Thither God bendeth his eyes, to see
How man to man turneth and clingeth,
Mate knitteth to mate,
Maiden to youth, matron to man,
With love to bind, beget and create
More, to shun Him and hate,
Even as they fear !

What hath God to do here ?
Driven by desire, He came down
To visit the earth He had made,
Clothed in lightning and majesty,
Beamed in white ethereal fire,
On the wind enthroned. Man was afraid

And hid, and called upon his desire
To hide in his bosom. Then God grew
wrath

With the world. He drave
With a sword man out of his path ;
But the closer man clave
To his smooth counterpart,
Loving even the grave,
Where she lay hid, more than God's heart.
Love starved now, God gloometh apart,
Too high for love, and removed too far,
Bound by his own decree,
Absolute King, alone—
Misjudged, hard - judging, powerless in
potency !

[He turns to ARIADNE holding out his hands.

O thou woman beloved !
Who hast known me, had of me
More than of man thou couldst ever—
Thou who hast given me
What save to God thou couldst never !
See now, imploring,
Urging thy heart,
I, God, stoop
To thy knees, thy lover !
I, God, at thy knees—
Stooping immortal—I, incorruptible,
Stooping to thee, corruptible !

What sayest thou ?

ARIADNE (in a low voice)

Whither thou callest go I.

DIONYSUS

Dazed and stricken thou doggest my heels.

ARIADNE

So I must follow or die.

CHORUS

A bitter ending ! Fate like a hound
Snuffing the track of the doomed one.

ARIADNE

Fate's wings quicken.

DIONYSUS

Fate driveth us both,
Both to the end appointed.

[He cries to her.

O woman !

O woman, give me thine heart !
Give me the whole, for lacking it,
I hold thee phantomwise,
Nor touched thee when compelling. Thy
heart,
Woman, thy heart ! Take back thy kisses,

/

Take back thy lips, withdraw thine arms
That clung and cradled me !
Thy heart ! Canst thou not understand
How God must spurn all flesh that hath not
soul,
Yet weary of soul unwarmed by flesh,
And anguish in his realm for mortal love !

[He is very near her, but she holds him off.]

ARIADNE

Touch me not again, for I have sinned :
Dark days are come.
Sin being done, I know where 'tis paid,
The debtor ruthless, the debt acknowledge.
For I was dedicate, being with child.
Therefore I die.

[The CHORUS in great desolation.]

CHORUS

Must we die, Dionysus ?
Dost thou leave us, O God, in our misery ?

DIONYSUS

Ariadne, stay thou patient for me.
I go to Artemis. She will hear.

In Delos, in the sacred sea,
Of virgin harbours, shores untrod,

Unsoiled and flawless as her birth,
Where Leto lightened of her load,
And never woman hath dared lie-in,
Nor dog set foot—in Delos holy
Among the trees that bear no fruit,
Aisles of plane, birchen groves,
Ilex deep, there sober-lipt
Artemis sister of high Apollo
Has pure worship. Thither now I
Will urge with pity, anon return
To my love—to my love.

ARIADNE

Lord, leave me not !
This place is full of voices.

[DIONYSUS vanishes as she speaks.]

CHORUS I

Gone ! He was, and is not.
This was a God.

[The scene darkens.]

CHORUS II

With him the light is gone.

ARIADNE, in deep dejection, has sunk to the ground
and buried her face in her knees. The CHORUS murmur
their despair.

CHORUS

Where is there peace,
Or where the land unstruck by God ?
Where shall the wounded fly,
Or in what covert lie
Unvisited by his rod ?

There is no peace at all !
Our robe of beauty is a pestilent blight,
God-given in our despite
And set like a gilded pall
To cover leanness, and hide corruption out of
sight !

[One points seaward and cries out.

CHORUS I

Succour from the sea !

CHORUS II

Or spite
More snarling.

CHORUS III

As a gathered squall
Drives o'er the azure of the main
And with his mantle enwrappeth ships,
Now cometh with hasty steps
A stranger to bless or ban.

CHORUS IV

His eyes are haggard with fear.

CHORUS V

It filleth the air I breathe.

CHORUS VI

Hush ! Speak him fair.

Hush ! Lest he hear.

[An Athenian SAILOR enters the scene. He salutes
ARIADNE.

SAILOR

Hail thou, that dost raise thy head
Above thy women, as queen of them.

ARIADNE

We greet you fairly, with service due—
Washing of feet, clean raiment, bread
And wine ; then help with your burden of
speech.

SAILOR

No help for that, lady, that you can give.

ARIADNE

Rest here, then speed the better.

SAILOR

Like a ship before the wind
I drive before shrilling fear.

ARIADNE

Make this your haven, O friend.

SAILOR

My haven ! I have but one.
I seek him here.

CHORUS

Seek whom ?

SAILOR

Heavy with news I seek
The son of Aegeus.

ARIADNE

Aha !

My Lady Hymnia, thou strikest ?
Hast thou me ? Hast thou me ?
Is thine arrow notched ?

SAILOR

Wrings her to this grief ? What pain

CHORUS

Thou crownest her sorrow.
Thou seekest her master and lord,
Who late abode with us, and then sailed
In a swift ship for the outland.

SAILOR

The King is gone ?

CHORUS

A king's son
Went he out.

SAILOR

Whither away ?

CHORUS

I know not. Hounded he went
By a God that breathed in him fever
And fury and thirst for blood.

SAILOR

Double woe !

CHORUS

Tell thy tidings.

SAILOR

The yearly tribute we owed to Crete,
Which like an issue drained our manhood
And left us poorer and yet more wan,
Was floated on our sighing
Its full three moons of anguish tense ;
Yet never answering sail hove up,
Or black as winter, or white as flowers
That foam the uplands in spring.

For one or other waited Athens,
Seeing that Theseus, grieving for her,
Himself the goodliest, himself did offer
To staunch that wound. And thus he left it,
That if he prospered, home to us
Speedy would come, whose white sails
Should flash our joy ; but if harsh fate
Adjudged him dead, his mourning ship
Should cloud the day with a black sail,
Black as our hopes. Such pact he made.

Now when so long a time was past
Rayless, the King, fear gnawing him,
Strenuous in prayer, himself the priest,
Long files of oxen, files of goats
Slaughtered daily, and sluiced the altars,
And after tottered, drunk with his fear,
To where the citadel, white to sea,
Breasts the liquid wonder of blue.—
There king Aegeus, the old, the venerable,
Winter-white, daily stood

Among the elders, older than any,
And saw the dawn redden and fire,
The sun rise burning out of the sea ;
Saw him anon swim over Athens,
Drowsing among her sleeping hills ;
Watched and waited ; then saw him slope,
Clothe with purple the bosomed hills,
And violet night steal down, with stars
Gemmed in her curtains, and the young moon
Stare acold on the muffled sea,
Wonderfully still. Waxt she and waned,
And new days broke ; then a new moon
Silvered the frosty girdle of earth :
Then an ominous day.

Stood up before the altar King Aegeus,
Poured wine upon earth, oil upon wood,
Set-to the torch ; the sullen wood
Hissed like a tangle of snakes, and died.
So the Gods knew not, smelt not, nor felt
The thigh-smoke, nor their nostrils with
 blood-reek
Were filled that day—for ere new flame
Caught the wood, one came and knelt
And cried to the king, The ship is here !
We went, he, Aegeus, blenching for fear,
Winter-white, and took up station
On the sea-ward wall. He bared his eyes,
Wandering and blue, to sea ; and each
Bared eyes and lookt, and lo ! as a cloud
Besmircht, black on a flawless sea,

Out some ten cable swayed a ship,
Black as death's jaws, and flapping heavily,
Dragging the mast, a soot-black sail.

He gave no cry, nor wailed at all,
But stretcht his arms out unto the ship
As clamouring what it bore ; so straining,
Fell piteous down to ruin and death
Over the sheer, and all his blood,
His golden blood, pock-markt the earth.
Thus in his full of days died he,
Old Aegeus, and Athens mourned him long,
As kinsfolk mourn housefather and lord.
But when with oar-thresh came that ship
To land, our woe was rent by laughing
For news of Theseus at hand ! who'd sent
Swift heralds of grace ; but in his joy
Made mad, let slip the promise given
Of message by sail of white or black,
So all this dule had wrought his people
And worship quicker than he could covet
On him, on Athens and her men.
Whom yet, with vow to break no bread,
Nor clip my locks, nor anoint my body,
Seeking, I climb the unageing sea.

CHORUS

Seek him not here ; here is no room
For hope or joy to have dominion.
For he is gone, and left his troth

A shredded rag on a bush of thorns,
To rot in air.

SAILOR

Went the king out
With all his pomp, with his bride and her
maids ?

CHORUS

The King went alone in the keen ship.

SAILOR

But swift returning will claim the bride.

CHORUS

Nay, surely. A God constrained him
To what (in men) were knavish work.

SAILOR

Under what God then, went he ?

CHORUS

Even Dionysus, the young, the wild,
Whose breath tormented all his force
So that he twisted under the stress of it,
And muttering murder, shagged and red,
Flung whence his honour lay moaning.

SAILOR

Now by that God, by Theban rites,
And mystic chorus round his altar,
Some fate hath sealed your eyes, and
 marred—
For to me all is clear.

CHORUS

Declare it.

SAILOR

O never the Theban men forsaketh
At this their season of sacrifice
With holy proffer of tragic song,
Intoned speech and charged dancing ;
Rather, beneficent, full of cheer,
Wakeful, watchful is he. He therefore,
Weeping our wretchedness, bare estate,
Forewarned the hero of instant need ;
But after when, the storm bypast,
Athens grows ruddy, smiles thro' tears,
Him will the cheerful God send out,
And bring to port with beckoning wind
The Cretan bride to rule his household
And share his state. See ye to this,
That Theseus when he come find love-looks
And sweet subservience, the wife's good
 part.

CHORUS

Thy words are honey, they drop as wine ;
Wisdom inflames them ; they shine true !
O lady, mend your sighing !

SAILOR

Perverse,
As one dismayed, with knotted hands
And hard-rimmed eyes—What is this for
cheer ?

CHORUS

New hope hath struck too sudden on her.

SAILOR

This is a wider wound, not healed.

ARIADNE

Anguish can have no stay,
Seeing I gave it life,
Nor cease till I cease. Pain,
Repentance, sharp reproach :
A time for dreams, and a time
For dumb expectance ; a time
For tears that come not—then She,
The Bright, strikes hasty her stroke.
Aegeus falleth. One more—

Another victim, from Crete,
Must pay the forfeit of debt.

O perjured, that could not watch
One hour ! Her eyelight burns !
There is one end for me.

CHORUS

The end is at hand, and the ship awaits.
An end in Athens, thy husband's arms.

ARIADNE

I have done evil, a thing of scorn,
A nameless thing, a thing of shame.
Pasiphaë taints my body,
To win me this end.

CHORUS

Alas, grief hath frozen her heart !

SAILOR

Keep high your hearts at least.

CHORUS

Listen her moan.

ARIADNE

Stern law hath Artemis.
Now in her eyes ruin I read,
Ruin remediless !

CHORUS

O madness which we wrought,
O blind desire possessing!

ARIADNE

Peace, O ye women, lured
By craft of mine, and misled
From sunny Crete, from the shrines
Of your Gods, from your fathers' halls,
From the kindled hearths, and streets foun-
tained and leafy—
Peace, this evil is mine!
O pride, now art thou mockt,
Faith in man's arms! Praise, thou wert
vain!
Mockery shoots his lips. The rain
Beats on the waste, mockery rings on the
plain,
Crying, O Fool, O Fool! and O Fool!
again.

CHORUS

O breath that her mother gave her!
O mother's breasts that she sucked!

ARIADNE

There was no end to my pride.
The strong lay prone before the light of my
face—

Treasure for virgin there ! I threw it aside.
Glory in Athens beckoned ; I saw the lined
ships

Thick in port, the shore white with a host
Of welcoming faces ; songs on all lips,
Flowers in all hands, epithalamic ; the grace
Of matron's estate, holy wife, mother holy—
All, all mine ! But I threw them aside.

CHORUS

O leader of virgin chorus,
Virgin no more !

ARIADNE

Then I was lost !
Athens was lost, her king snug in my womb,
My new womb filled with a king—lo ! my
offence
Greater than any sin under the sun,
That a mother should barter her child, starve
her breasts,
Starve her eyes of the light
Of eyes that never should see it !
Where would ye have such a woman tossed ?

CHORUS

O love of living ! O soul's eclipse !
Cast her adulteress, perjuress !

ARIADNE

Hell is the end, the gray
Whispering vales of the restless dead and
acold
Thrill to attend my soul.
Hades that grim old king
Fretteth his gnarly hands on the knops of
his throne,
Twisteth his mouth awry, and his pale
Heavy-eyed listless wife, from the uplands of
Enna
Ravisht for his delight,
Feeleth her chill blood stir for my coming in.
This is my end—how else would ye pay the
sin ?
Would ye crown with a golden harvest such
deeds,
Look for a blossom after the blight ?
Black-hearted, how shall my fruit be white,
Or how reap figs where ye sow the thistle
seeds ?
I have no crown, but instead
Reproach for garment, a shroud
Of curses thick as the blind snow-cloud :
Death unhallowed among the happier dead—
Death for me and the babe I have never fed.

CHORUS

For end of sin are madness and death,
Shame, an ungarlanded tomb.

ARIADNE

This is the end of sorrow, for here
I lay me down, aching for ease
Where ease never can be.
I, the King's daughter, ragged in shame,
Seeking to hide her name ;
Calling upon the seas
To fall over her and drown her legend in
water !
I, the King's daughter,
Daughter of Minos, ancient of God, and of
her
The burning woman, Pasiphaë, cursing,
accurst,
Whose sin Heaven shuddered to hear
And Hell stood silent. She may never be
clean.
She must drag her sin as a chain,
Show her robe with the crimson stain ;
She must wring her hands, utter her wailing
cry—
“ I was lovely, I loved, I was false, and I dare
not die ! ”
Let me die, Goddess ; less dare I live !

CHORUS

Ai ! Ai ! She is beside herself.

SAILOR

What can the end be but sorrow ?

ARIADNE

Tarry ye here—all is not done.

CHORUS

What more for sacrifice ?

ARIADNE

There's that to offer the Goddess will have.

CHORUS

Thou hast poured thy libation.

ARIADNE

She had it, but shall have now
A new libation, a cleaner flame.
Tarry ye here.

[She goes swiftly into the grove.

CHORUS

As mist she goeth !

An old saw teacheth, Be not over bold,
Nor seek too much. Content thee in the
mean,
Thou shalt live smoothly. O thou Queen
Whose warning finger guarding the lip,
Whose sinewy limbs stript bare for work

Show thee, how hardy, yet withal
Forearmed with circumspection ! Thou
Couldst teach us whose hot blood
Springeth, a mounted flood,
Prompt for all turbulence,
Fretting at bars, leaping them, rushing on
To ruin sooner than hold back !

Service is freedom ! Chidden reins, locked
lips,
Proud high heart, proud bent head, stayed
word :
Having these, men were lords of the earth,
For lordship of all is his who is lord of
himself.

O proud and patient ! O fire of the chaste !
O flame
Of loveliness meek and mute ! O modestly
wise !
O passion of love in bond ! O bosom kept
down
By folded arms and strait girdle ! The Gods
Have no more lovely, no more delicate
flower
In all the hedged garden where God is the
sun,
And the flowers God, self-begot of his own
pure beam !
Thou that servest and waitest, inherit the
earth !

SAILOR

The worst of fortunes be averted !
Why tarrieth she ? What would she there ?

CHORUS

Go thou and seek her. A fear is on me.
God with a God may strive, air choke
With pealing battle !

SAILOR

Ay ! for the Theban is doughty, and She,
The Arcadian, swifter than wind.

CHORUS

Our little garden plot
Is wasted with thunder, all the flowers
Hang black. They die amain.
So it must be when God wrestles with God.

The powers of darkness and light,
Powers of Earth and Heaven, powers of sea,
Strain, lash in tumult of war !
Sublime above, King Zeus,
With motionless eyelids, setteth his gaze
To some quick-burning star
And lives its life, as He lives ours.
So throbs in his work the craftsman !

O stranger, go thou, seek for her !
Seek her, the king's daughter.

He goes without more words. There is a long
silence. They hear his cry ; then pray.

Dorian Crete, whose breathing is prayer,
And daily task a sacrifice ;
Whose acts are thanksgiving of the thought ;
O Crete, where Heaven's lord,
The Thunderer, nodding o'er the world,
Lay for a space, gathering the threads
Of all his lordship—Dorian Crete !
I weep for thee, I know the word
Is past that never these eyes shall see thee.
O Crete, in this hour I weep for thee !

[They see the SAILOR coming through the trees.

Ah ! thus her peace is made. Sisters,
This is the end.

[He comes in carrying the body of ARIADNE.

SAILOR

Peace ! for ye stand
Facing the dead, in this gentle thing.
So ! shroud ye, lift your dirge. So, life !
So, breath, that scarce grew thinner for thee !
So, light, that grew the gladder !
Life, breath and light together
Quenched and drowned, quenched and
drowned !

CHORUS

Ai ! Ai ! my joy, my darling one !
O niggard fate of thine !

SAILOR

This is so piteous, even God,
I think, would stoop and sorrow.

CHORUS

God rideth his wild way,
Whose onset may be trackt
By wringing hands, by hopeless eyes !

SAILOR

Power goeth in God ; Love hath no place,
But only majesty, iron law,
That cove to subservience—so here,
What can ye do, poor women ?

CHORUS

Know
Our children happy, being less than God,
In that they cannot wreak such woe.
Let God be mighty ; but let man love !
And loving, be happy in spite of God.

They compose her for burial, close her eyes, cover
her face ; then lay her in the midst.

Our meagre life affords
A time to sin, for tears a little time ;
Thereafter, when the mower whets his scythe,
We do confess ourselves to be as grass
And bow us down to the sward.
Yet who shall put unhappiness in this,
Or who, when so much travail hangs thereby,
Crave an immortal home ?
For while we live we love, and, loved,
Hold life a sceptred fee.
But the Gods love not, neither die, so live
Wretchedly, not as we !
O sterile Gods, banned by their own disdain,
Almighty, vacantly great,
Starved, pitiless, unpitied, feared and
shunned !

How shall man dream or how declare
The chill remoteness of God ?
Who may envy Him the dearth
And silence of His abode ?
Love is light of our darling earth—
But bleak His kingdom and bare.
Where man goeth lowly in his mirth,
Loveless and sunless goeth God.

III

THE DEATH OF HIPPOLYTUS

THE ARGUMENT

KING MINOS, driven from Crete, seeks refuge from tempest in Sicily, the realm of Cocalus his enemy. At the same hour comes HIPPOLYTUS, son to Theseus and Antiope, driven into exile by the thwarted desires, now turned to hate, of his stepmother PHAEDRA, MINOS' daughter and last of the great House. She, too, half-repenting, is come to win him back if she may. Thus MINOS and Theseus, Crete and Athens, meet once more in their children.

PERSONS

MINOS KING OF CRETE.

CHORUS OF CRETAN PRIESTS.

ARTEMIS.

PHAEDRA.

HIPPOLYTUS.

A MESSENGER.

THE SCENE

A rocky coast, near Agrigentum ; a cliff looking over the sea. On either hand a steep path leads down to the sea-beach. The time is afternoon of a winter's day. The sky is clouded, and a fitful wind makes the sea unrestful. The waves break upon the beach. The sound of them is heard throughout the action, now furious, now lulled.

THE DEATH OF HIPPOLYTUS

MINOS speaks the Prologue. He is figured as an old man in black robes. His beard is long and grey. He walks with a staff.

MINOS

Darkness gathers, and boding of storm
Upon my ways ; unfriended I go
In a waste land, full of eyes watching,
Of foemen ambushed, beset by the sea,
Barred and bastioned by the high rocks
Whereout looketh no issue benign
To herald peace, with gleam like a shaft
Of amber, low in the sky in winter.
Shock upon shock, the sea's wild armies
Throb at the cliffs ; and I stand here
An old man exiled, lost to honour,
Power or the homage of the just—
I, who was Minos, the friend of Zeus.

The just know me no more, nor have
known
Since Anger held me, and Malice and Clamour,
Snarling tenants, entered me in
And bayed me mad, that I bit at Crete ;

And she, putting up both her hands,
Feared and shrank : then great in vain !
I, friend of Zeus, was great in vain !

They smelt the spoil from afar. The
Achaian,
Hungry Megara and her hordes
Flocked like birds that search the watery
leagues
For wrack ; and the fickle sea,
Once a broad cincture to hold us inviolable,
Staying, bowing herself before us,
Forbad them not. As a dark cloud
Of evil birds, attendant on death, they
gathered,
Watching sideways, eyeing us up and down,
Blinking, waiting the death-grapple
Of Crete and me, till Zeus should yield me ;
Which done, they hovered, settled, and
feasted long.

So sagged, so fell the goodly tower
Of all my honour. Renowned Crete,
Dorian Crete, whereof I was,
The which I was, cast me out
Empty-handed, and stood to see,
With estranged eyes, vacantly, how I past
Bent to my yoke of shame ; so we took
Ship, and the sea looked wildly, and bared
Defiant teeth which hissed upon us
Three days, three nights of fitful weather—

Veering winds, countering currents, and
snaps

Of flying foam, cold in our faces ;
And then a lull, and a stupor of calm.

Anon sang in the shrouds a great wind,
And Heaven was black, and the mews rested
not,

Wailing, drifting about us. The storm
Leapt sudden upon us, rain in the van,
Driven as mist. A howling wind
Tore up the sea ; the sea in torment
Writhed in that clutch, and bare for birth
Mountainous water, swift ruin,
A swerving death-floe, a smooth pit
Wherein lay ravening death, with fear
Cresting the wave's wild head. I saw
The lightning flare to the rim of the water
And bodying clamour, lap in one sheet
Of flame the world. Therein we drave
Two days, two nights, numb to the heart,
With eyeballs frozen, rigid hands,
Blencht, horrible lips, and made this coast
Spied through the flitting rain, this coast
Of low grey shore thundering in surf,
Wet rocks, a line of wind-bent trees,
A long white shelf of beaten water,
Wherein a haven ; wherein we dropt
Panting. But Zeus the unrelenting
Turned now the other edge of his blade
To score our hearts ; for what the sea
Had hungered in vain, Cocalus, the King

Of this waste land, grudged, and drew sword
To front me, King and Hero, and to prevail.

The CHORUS of Priests, robed in grey, has entered the scene, has built a rude altar of stones and lit a fire upon it. And now they walk round about it, invoking the Genius of the land.

CHORUS

As to a mountain holy,
Peaked in blue trembling air,
Anointed by the glory of the sun,
Faltering and slowly
I lift my aching eyes
To this vague land that lies
As a proud Queen to see her day-work done,
Breasting the southern glamour, and slaves
the north
To fan the tresses of her heavy hair,
And with her stretcht-out hands draws east
and west in one.

For rest I search thine eyes,
For rest I heed thy voice
Calling among the water-brooks of easeful
things.
Cool are the winnowings
And full of solace when the sun-glare dies
The play of thy great wings
Across the thick of dusk with hidden noise.
So on the heart of night,

Beneath thy serious eyes,
 Wrapt in the silver light
 About thy head that lies,
 Lulled by the mysteries
 And soft low breathings of thy still delight,
 Let me faint out of strife where sleep is
 death's surmise.

Surely, now surely succour cometh in,
 Surely is paid the sin
 And past the burden of night !
 For here in milder air
 The fading day smiles meekly, a kinder death
 Than threatened us beneath
 The crave and hunger of the sea.

MINOS

Well may ye lift your hands !
 For what availeth man before God ?

CHORUS

Nothing, O King, in this pass.
 Swifter than hounds he singleth the wrong.

MINOS

Evil on evil—do I not know ?
 But do the Gods hear ?

CHORUS

Prayer they hear, strained hands they see,
Smell sacrifice.

MINOS

Now let them hear
Me, Minos, in my last throe—
Me, Minos, dying a king.

He goes to the altar and, taking incense, casts it on
the fire. A cloud rises.

Artemis, hear me now !
Thee, chaster than blown flowers,
Holiest, I invoke.
By that smooth maid of thine,
Arethusa, that here in this land
Kept her raiment unsoiled
And fled the ravisher, here to hide
In Ortygian rocks her sinuous grace,
I cry to thee, Lady of Lakes,
Lovely upon the Mountains !

If ever sacrifice duly
Were done in Crete, or piety
Of offering paid and taken ;
If with the dance, the paean,
Or linked chorus of maidens, all
Robed in the saffron delightful to thee ;
If ever one life, or one death
Made thee one sin's amends
Done in heat ; if one sire

Held marriage-vow, or one wife
 Were holy ; by honourable youth,
 By age venerable under thine eyes ;
 By all such deeds and well-doers
 I claim thy mercy. Not now forsake
 These thy servants who stand
 By me in perilous hour.
 Artemis, hear thou me !

CHORUS

A worthy word of thine, proudly spoken !

MINOS

I know in whom I believe.
 She, being proud, misliketh not pride.

CHORUS I

I know it !

CHORUS II

Nay, speak low.
 She whom thou soughtest is here.

The Goddess ARTEMIS appears out of the altar-smoke,
 clothed in silver, shining to the feet. MINOS covers his
 face. The CHORUS lift up their hands.

ARTEMIS

Few thanks, O Minos, from me to thee
 For my fair land blight-bitten, and growth
 Of weeds, thy planting, on clean tilth,

Or service of honour and sweet breath
Made foul and unacceptable.
Herein offending, take thou thy wages.

For what shall profit the song of priests
Gross to the lips, or incense burned
On shameful shrines? I, Artemis,
Delightful in worship of white hands,
How shall I praise thee who had Pasiphaë
To wife, Pasiphaë rotten with sin?
I praise thee not, nor for her sin's brood,
Minos, be sure; for sin must breed
A spawn of sin, and she who polluted
My house with shrieking, sent thine to death.

By thy offending was I offended
With Crete, my garden; thanks to thy fault
Never was sacrifice duly done,
Nor offering paid, nor taken, nor ever
In dance took I pleasure, or paean
Or linked chorus. Nor could one life,
One death make me thy fault's amends—
For he must pay that runneth the reckoning.
Therefore no sire, careful of vows,
Shall salve thee careless; nor Cretan wife
Holy, make holy Pasiphaë;
Nor youth be lovely, nor age venerable
While thine makes clamour to God.

Claim no mercy of mine, Minos,
But make thee ready. Ariadne, Androgeos
Paying thy debts, Phaedra remaineth—
To do what she shall do, to pay what she
must,

Until in her quench the kindled fire
Of its own surfeited, flagrant course.

Shall I praise then thy house, Minos ?
I praise it not, nor thank thee.

CHORUS

O fierce and cold ! O Lady of Snows !
Burn us not so with thy frosty eyes !

MINOS

That which is done is done. On my head
Be what cometh. I stand upright.

CHORUS

Pride is oft-times a shield ; but not here.
In deep waters what shield availeth ?

MINOS

A man can see the scope of his eyne,
Guard the strip of soil that he seeth,
And guess the morrow — when morrow
cometh.

CHORUS

The household's father is as a god :
As the belled sheep leadeth the flock
followeth.

MINOS

Your weakness then is my added sin !

[He turns him to the GODDESS.

Hearken, Lady, to him whose quiver
Is empty, and he left mockworthy !
Hard have I lived, fought, spent—if well,
Let Zeus remember ; if ill, then Zeus
Shall trig the balance, and Nemesis
Raving abroad, cut me down, I saying,
'Tis well done ! But let her be speedy,
 strike
Fair and true. Dally not, Huntress.
Let Minos the King die in arms.

CHORUS

Tempt not God !

ARTEMIS

 This was a man !
Heed me now, the Bow-Bender,
Queen of the Winds, the Waters, the Hills,
The Open Country and quiet places
That lie pure from the taint of men.
Because thou goest with fear unacquainted,
And who will save his life shall lose it,
And who fling it careless, he shall reap—
This is my word : there swayeth one life,
Dear to me, caught in a flood

Of passion—not his—which if thy House
 save,
 That act shall save thee. Yet if it fail,
 Seeing thou art old, and undimmed thine
 eye,
 Take thou this further grace. Thou shalt
 die,
 Minos, but die in arms.

Heed well this spoken word, nor think to
 amend it.
 A man's sin only himself can shrive.

The image of the Goddess fades, and the fire dies
 down.

CHORUS

Mystery ! The King is alone,
 A stranger treading a strange land.
 No son remains to him, none of his line
 But Phaedra, queening in Athens. And she,
 What shall she do, in a strange land ?

[MINOS sits and broods.

In the dim fields of time,
 Ere yet were cities in Crete
 To blossom their hundredfold ;
 Or when as yet were not the stablisht towns,
 Cnossus nor Gortyna ;
 Nor yet to the Twelve Gods given
 The soothful homage of rhyme—

Squarely stood upon earth, rafted with
 goodly beams,
The house that Minos the King
Reared for his high-got race,
Sprung from Zeus that sendeth the thunder
 down !

Fair was the hall for guests, the greeting they
 gave
Fair, and the sending, how it was blithe and
 brave !

Sing now the deeds of the Bull ¹
That bore Agenor's meek daughter
On the sheer bulk of his strength
To the chalk cliff in the dark blue water !
Pasturing Phaestos was glad, and sang
The hills at the wondrous birth
Of the sons of the son of Cronos, Sarpedon
 mighty of girth,
And Minos ! Minos, the searcher of hearts,
 judge of the earth !
How was the house goodly for feast and
 sleep ;
Who shall tell the foundations, for they were
 deep !

Laughed all the land, for the ships
Gathered the spoils of the sea ;
Tyre yielded her increase, the cities of old,
Ophir and Zend, paid tribute ; Egypt that
 lips

¹ ZEUS.

First the frontal of day made offering due
To the Pride of the sea of the sea's first-
fruits !

High on a throne graved in the face of the
rock,

Set to the sea and the caved sky and the ships,
Judged the chosen of Zeus, Minos, Searcher
of hearts.

Shall the pride of the house ever be full,
Or ever fall down the tower of the Sons of
the Bull ?

Thrice nine winters, nine summers, did he
doom for our Lord,

He, Minos, familiar friend of King Zeus.

All wisdom, all knowledge were his, all force
of the sea.

Poseidon that shaketh the land held him for
friend ;

He was dreadful, he knew no end !

But tell of the end of Britomart, white-
shouldered maid,

Of Sarpedon the end, of Daedalus, cunning
of hand ;

Of Megara what hath he made ?

Nay, but Pasiphaë, blood-tresséd queen, let
me sing, and her deed without name !

For woe brooded over the house, and
stealthily came

Darkness, and rending apart, and wailing
and shame.

What shall wisdom avail,
Or knowledge profit a man ?
How shall Peace go abroad
To smile and plenish the land,
Where Love is not, but Lust ?
Lust drieth to dust ;
Sin enters, and pale
Care doth hanker, and Trust
Shivereth, falleth to fail.
Pasiphaë ! Out ! She sinned and fell down
Clogged in the mire of her shame ;
Swift Androgeos, leaping for battle, fell, and
so fell
Sweet-bosomed Ariadne with love on her
lips.
Alas, who of them all remaineth to tell ?
Dwindles the pride of the house that was
forceful and keen.
The wild nettle blows where proud lilies
have been !

CHORUS I

One remaineth !

CHORUS II

Cometh !

CHORUS III

To battle with death !

CHORUS IV

What is thy thought ?

CHORUS V

I know it !

CHORUS VI

Phaedra is near.

CHORUS

Phaedra resteth, of ruinous beauty, white
with desire !

O gloomy, ravenous eyes,

O hair black as the plumes of night !

Phaedra, of smouldering eyes

Fired with the mutter of fire,

The burnt mouth of desire,

And writhing fingers of fever and fire !

Phaedra, of snake-black hair

And searching face of a wolf !

Lo, a scalding drop of Pasiphaë's blood

Hissed on the white of her flesh,

And gave her a thirst never to tire.

Phaedra, Phaedra, lo, for an end of song !

To the house she resteth alone for ransom or
wrong.

MINOS

What sing ye of Phaedra, my last flower,
The last flower of my marriage-wreath ?

CHORUS I

By tingling blood I know her here
In this empty land.

CHORUS II

Is she here ?
The red dawn's issue cometh to pass.
Listen ye to the mourning wind.

In a pause of listening, the wind is heard shrilling.
The shock of the waves increases.

Thro' the gates of the storm,
Down the mass'd battalions of air,
Full of the whistling fear
Wherewith it shaketh us,
Phaedra coming with swiftly seeking eyes,
And the grudge that never dies !

PHAEDRA comes swiftly up the path from the shore,
and stands at the edge of the cliff, looking at MINOS,
who sees her, but gives no sign. The CHORUS hail her
with a wailing chant.

Phaedra ! Pasiphaë's child !
Alone on the torrent of fate—
Thee now Judgment and Vengeance await,
Stained with the stain that defiled,
The spot, the smirch and the stain
Of a spurned love bitten wild
To torture of pain !
O marr'd visage, never to gladden again,
For never can be forgiven the soilure of
love ;

On the soul that sinneth must fall wrath
 from above
 Till the debt be lain.
 Phaëdra ! Phaëdra ! Lo, for an end of
 song,
 See in the low clouds warping the land
 Phaëdra, last of the Cretans, at hand.

MINOS (muttering)

I see her, Phaëdra, once my child.

CHORUS (watching the two)

As when two lions on the waste
 That sudden meet, dare not forego
 The grudge they owe,
 And greet not, neither eye each other,
 But stand awaiting the fate
 That works askance in the mind—
 So here of royal race the sire and whelp
 Stand grimly cognizant ; nor passes between
 Their lockt lips one All hail ! or Blest art
 thou !
 O storm-beset ! O driven apart !

[PHAEDRA has now approached MINOS.]

PHAEDRA

With no rejoicing, nor memories,
 Nor leap of nature to nature do I,

Queen of Athenians, greet thee, Cretan—
Once king, now exile under a ban,
Journeying no more surely nor gladly
Than I. Am I so sure or so glad?
Death-bound art thou; and I, fate-bitten,
Drive where I must, by passion urged.

MINOS

An ill team hales thy car.

PHAEDRA

A darker evil flogs the steeds.

MINOS

Woe on our house! The air is thick
With hurrying clouds, and wave leaps wave,
Emulous which shall gulph the ship!

CHORUS

Hark! the Erinnyes riding the storm.

PHAEDRA

Madder the storm that screameth within.

MINOS

Better meet death, and so end all.

CHORUS

Look to it, ye ! The Goddess revealed
A way to escape Pasiphaë's debt—
O sin-dabbled, wreckt Pasiphaë !

PHAEDRA (stung)

How say ye, slaves, that speak ill of a queen
To me a queen ?

CHORUS

I stand in a case
Where ancient wrong stares horribly.

PHAEDRA

Go to ! Where fate drives, sin is not.
Necessity doth bind us.

CHORUS

How shall be named her deed ?

PHAEDRA

Out, dogs, that spurn but the fallen—
Jackals yelping a lion's track !
Dead is that queen that nurtured ye
With kindly offices, in and out,
A mother to your tribe !
She is dead, she is dead ; and her fault,
Irresistible, sudden,

Dead too, atoned by death,
And shame which is death in life.
Shall not the Gods give over ? And ye,
If they rest, shall ye not give over ?
A trip ! And your tongues a-wagging !
Reproaches of you, with mud, not blood
In the veins ! (To MINOS.) And on you
 shame,
King once, and now a slave
Whipt by your slaves !

MINOS

 O Phaedra,
Peace with the dead ! And on us
Be peace if thou wilt ; for thus Artemis,
Gleaming white from the heart of the fire,
Spake even now : If my house save a life,
That act saveth me, thy father, and thee,
Last of my line. Peace now to the dead,
And to the living an end of strife.

[PHAEDRA reflects, and then speaks suddenly.

PHAEDRA

Rehearse that word of God.

MINOS

Tell her the doom of the Goddess.

CHORUS

Thus and thus uttered She
That haunts the fallows when days are young,
And is discerned in the wind of dawn :
"Trembles a life beloved of me,
Swayed in floods of riotous breath,
Not his breath—which if thy house shall
 save,
So shall the act save thee and thy house."

PHAEDRA

Here is a marvel, worthy of wonder !
Such life have I to pluck from the grave ;
Such have followed over the sea,
Resting not, staying not, ever pursuing.
Courage then, falter not, be not afraid.

CHORUS

Thou that art last shall be first,
Ransomer of thy land !
Now therefore boldly unto the Reaper stand
With entreaty and prayer washed over thy
 hardy eyes,
That he yield, ere the king dies,
And we die !

PHAEDRA

 Ye ! Nay, not ye.
Such as ye God strikes not,

But leaves to rot and return
Into the mould. But such as have force
To dare him he strikes. Me ere long,
Hardily daring, he well may strike,
If I, counting the price,
Dare all for one crown of joy.

The man liveth yet whom your Goddess, not
mine,
Regardeth—Hippolytus, son to my lord,
Whom to sin once I tempted.

MINOS

Thou temptedst him ?

PHAEDRA

Ay, for I loved.

MINOS

Treachery ?

PHAEDRA

Traitress sooner
To a man than a God. Eros with a torch
Set the fire to my heart ; and the flame
leaped,
Enkindled the brain, made me cunning.

MINOS

Thou toldest thy love ?

PHAEDRA

I whispered it
By night, in words that tripped each other.
And in my palms my nails drew blood ;
And in the sockets my eyes were dry.

MINOS

And he ?

PHAEDRA

He was very still.
He trembled. But when I touched him
Turned, white and fierce, upon me.

MINOS

Phaedra, what then ?

PHAEDRA

In my chamber,
Padding the floor, up and down,
Fighting thro' dark which beat like hot waves,
Opening, shutting fans of madness,
I spent the night and the day.

MINOS

Phaedra, what then ?

PHAEDRA

All my love

Seethed like gall. Loving I entered
The chamber, hating came out,
Craving him cold as once the heat.
I compassed his wreck.

MINOS

How ?

PHAEDRA

His father,
My husband, I sought, with cozening words
Writhing, coiling about my tongue,
Of violence offered me by Hippolytus.
He curst his son, drave him abroad
Out of the city, out of his lands ;
Prayed Poseidon, the Earth-Girdler,
Boon for boon, that by all the thanks
He, God, owed him, mortal,
Requital swift on the youth Hippolytus—
Malice of the inconsolate sea,
Chill death on the sea-beach,
Unhallowed—here, not in Attica,
Lest death unconsecrate smirch that land
And curse the invoker of cursing.
The which achieved, soon I repented ;
Loving again—him now I am come
To save, to succour, to see.
Let Artemis joy—and live thou !

MINOS

Save him, daughter ; but save thyself.
'Tis thou art the slave, not I.

CHORUS

O dark-browed queen, look not so fatal !

PHAEDRA (to herself)

A bitter seed in my heart's croft
Sows sharp discord. My fair dreaming
Shattered lies. I must renounce
All I builded so high.

But he will come again,
My beloved, and needs
Must look on me. He will scorn me,
Yet I shall see his eyes !

MINOS

See him not. But cry to Poseidon,
Confessing thy fault.

PHAEDRA

To see him I came—
To see him once more—to speak with him
—touch him !
Once more to touch him !

MINOS

Thou hatest? Or lovest?

PHAEDRA

Love—hate—are they not one?
I need him—he draws me— all my body
Acheth for him. Ah, Gods, give me ease!
I die, Gods! I burn!

CHORUS

See how her passion tears at her!
See where her palms have clencht
The dark blood wells and spreads!
O fatal seed of Zeus grafted in her!

(To MINOS)

But thou, thus worn and weariful,
Withdraw thyself a space from wind and
storm,
Watchful that mercy break the dark clouds
thro',
Streaming like pennons of the issuing day.

PHAEDRA

On me reclined, seek we the tents,
Whence, thou asleep, I'll work for all.

She withdraws MINOS from the scene, leading him
to the tents. The storm is now high and fierce.

CHORUS

Her pride shall be as a tower
To endure for a day !
But the tide riseth, the waterfloods leap,
Poseidon shaketh the reins ; all the deep
Groweth hungry and grey—
Then at hand is the hour !

See, like a bleacht dog-wolf
Outmastered by his whelp,
Timorous goeth the King, in doubt,
Bending before the fury he bred,
And her feverous calm.

O of all punishments the worst
And hardest to be borne,
To see himself distorted in her soul !
O sharper than the thorn,
Than aloë-spike more resolutely keen,
Unendurable scorn,
That he who sinneth once
Cannot thereafter sorrow and do well,
But sows a fatal seed
Of shame where might renew honour's old
citadel.

Herein, methinks, Fate urges hard,
And flinty the heart of God,
Since man to sin by necessary force
Drifteth, nor can retard
The swirling pit that sucks him deeply down

To death, where Fortune guides his neighbour's course
To equal unearned glory and reward.
But harder yet the scourges of the rod,
That not content with death
Nor the labour of choked breath,
Brandeth his seed till the tide of woe be
run !

CHORUS I

Give over, give over, I hear the tramp
Of horses, the groaning of wheels !

[They look to the shore below.

CHORUS II

Lo, a traveller headeth the gale !

CHORUS III

His cloak is a banner, sport of the wind !

CHORUS IV

He holdeth his spear that the fury may not
prevail,
Nor shake his well-knitted limbs.

CHORUS V

He scorneth to look behind
At the wide ruin of foam.

CHORUS VI

And see ! He beareth for crest
The Sphinx wingéd and fierce.

CHORUS I

Tender of years, Athenian, nobly born ;
Poseidon he holdeth in scorn—
That setteth the look of a hawk to the storm
And smileth at ease.

CHORUS II

This, this is he, that should earn our sur-
cease.

HIPPOLYTUS drives his chariot up the steep road
from the shore. The CHORUS hail him.

CHORUS

Hail, O King's son, that lightest on the
weary !
Hold—that thy light depart not those that
grieve.

HIPPOLYTUS

If king got me, no king calleth me son.

CHORUS

Yea, but I know thee sprung from the
Amazon,

From battle-breathing Antiopé,
And Theseus, tamer of men !
Thou Sun-anointed, begot of splendid wed-
lock,
Thou nervy hunter, Hippolytus,
I know what gloomy fate
And hoarse envious breath
Urgeth thee on to abjure
Thy pride of estate !

HIPPOLYTUS

What I must bear let my shoulders suffice.

CHORUS

Nay, surely some blessed God
Favours thee !

HIPPOLYTUS

Still I serve—
As once in life, now in death.

CHORUS

Often the Gods seem harsh, and man
Driven thereby to riot.

HIPPOLYTUS

Shall a man, then, impoverish himself ?
If God sink, man may stand upright;
True to the God he has made.

CHORUS

What God thinkest thou to make ?

HIPPOLYTUS

I make but of that which I find,
 Elemental, veined in the earth :
 Here fleeting kindness, grace of tears,
 And here swift flight to a mark ; here
 patience,
 Long watching, service pure, glad eyes,
 Clean limbs ; rejoicing ; giving of thanks—
 For of such I think God is.

CHORUS

 Thou thinkest !
 Stricken to exile, cursed by kindred !

HIPPOLYTUS

Unjustly stricken, wounded sore,
 I hold such nothing to my loss.

CHORUS

What hast thou lost, Hippolytus ?

HIPPOLYTUS

 Faith.
 Faith in the earth. How should ye know,
 Who know not my search, my empty soul

Anhungered ? Oh, I lived tranquil days
In the deme where Athens feels the sea
Smiling towards her, in the cleft
Between the hills' breasts, seamless of scar
Or jut of rock ; between the hills
Where hides the temple of Artemis,
The Huntress, Delian-born.
I lived there tranquil in wind and sun,
Tanned by the wind, by sun made ripe,
To growth in service chaste, since I
To the chaste Goddess was dedicate,
From my youth upward. Tender I made
Of body and mind, yet saw her never,
Nor knew—yet felt her there in the wind,
In morning glory of sun, in moonlight,
In whisper of leaves and sighing breath of
the pines—
But saw at last.

Like the wind's spirit,
Like the wind's spirit in open lands,
A young wild maiden, with hounds astrain,
Stood in the wood, and looked and wondered.

White shone her shoulder in the still wood-
land,
White her knee under green kirtle ;
Peering she stood, astart like a bird
To flutter of leaves. Swift then a smile
Rayed like a morning flush upon her,
Sunned her serious gaze and met me,
Worshipping there with beating heart.

I saw the blue beam of her wide eyes,
 Her carven throat and still raiment ;
 Whispered her name, as now I do,
 Lifted hands, made my thanksgiving :
 " O thou miracle, spirit of pure breath,
 God be thanked for the glory he made in
 thee ! "
 I loved a Goddess. Never since then this
 world
 Held a woman for me.

CHORUS

Thou servest well. We of Crete serve her.

HIPPOLYTUS

I had served unknowing ; now served I on
 With reasons for my praises ;
 Adored her when sun smote the sea's cold
 rim
 To sudden fire ; in the moon's fair phases
 Made faithful tender of sober days ;
 Gave her the breath of wholesome life,
 Guerdon of body, guerdon of mind,
 Worship of limbs ; for thus
 She will be served that loveth in us
 Prepossession that foileth sin.
 So I waxt strong, and with strength too
 praised her
 Till that day dawned that I may not name.

CHORUS

Ah, but I know it !

HIPPOLYTUS

O pool of sin !

The fair woman desecrate ;
Lust in love and lust in hate !
Bright breasts with milk of gall,
Fierce lips that would suck all
Honour out, and kissing find
Honour in the unclean mind.
Phaedra, child of Peitho's brood,
Bred this cancer in my blood ;
Made love unlovely, unmirthed mirth,
Garbed in scum the daedal earth.

CHORUS

O greater horror than this hour !
Speak on and fill the cup of this wrath.

HIPPOLYTUS

I, curst alike of Gods and Father—
When he that did beget me
Held me the traitor they perjur'd me,
With curses thrust me out, and charged
Poseidon to make an end—
Not slow to meet him, now call on death.

CHORUS

The storm thickens and grows !
The spears of the army of death,
Bare as the wild boar's teeth,
Gleam for their glutting of blood.
Soul of a God, grudged by God, to thy foes
Abandoned, and shame beneath
The licking and suck of the flood ;
To the rage of the wind that blows,
And the fear that grows !

HIPPOLYTUS

Nay, I am ripe for death
Whom Love hath despised.
My soul it hath agonised :
What should my body fear ?

CHORUS

O son, wait still upon Love,
For he dwelleth here ;
Tho' see him ye may not nor hear
Even the lilt of his wings,
He hovereth near.

HIPPOLYTUS

Yea, for within me sings
A clear voice, saying, Fast
Take up heart, for at last

Lighteth Love upon earth—
And thy torment bypast.

CHORUS

Love is near to the birth :
Soon like the morning star
He shall guide thee where gardens are,
And fountains of sweet water,
And an end of war.

HIPPOLYTUS

Maybe the swift daughter
Of Leto, the girdled, the pure,
Artemis eager and sure,
Will snatch me that served her ever
From Hades' allure.

CHORUS

Thou shalt 'scape the fret and the fever,
Thou that art white !
Thou shalt pass in the night
As the worn soul from the breath of a man,
And the end be light !

Let her forget thee not ! But hold,
Let her defend thee ; for Theseus' wife
Cometh with evil on her brows
Ridging them straight over her waiting
eyes.

O full of injuries !
 O thou that holdest Crete
 In the throes of thy forceful hands,
 Phaedra, look to the saving that lies
 As a spell, as a wonder-stroke,
 Mute, till thou bid it rise !

HIPPOLYTUS

Hold ye ; nay, withdraw yourselves rather,
 For the issue is mine, and is now.

He descends from his chariot, and stands to meet
 PHAEDRA. The CHORUS prepare to withdraw.

CHORUS

A dread encounter, fraught with fate !
 Lo, in this injured one,
 Under death's eyes, our life ;
 And she who drew him within their dreadful
 scope
 Must save, or all must perish !
 Come, let us pray awhile
 With hands uplifted to our patron Gods :
 Guardians of Crete ! Artemis, Pythian
 Apollo !

They withdraw to the back of the altar. The wind
 blows furiously. PHAEDRA enters, battling against it.
 She stops when she sees HIPPOLYTUS ; then comes
 slowly and stealthily forward until she is close to him.
 Her movements are those of a leopardess.

PHAEDRA

No rest ! I have no rest.

HIPPOLYTUS

What dost thou seek ?

PHAEDRA

Ease.

I am tormented. I follow thee.

HIPPOLYTUS

To see the end ? Trust Poseidon.
Hark to him now.

PHAEDRA

O what has death to do with thee ?
Grey death—and thy sanguine life !

HIPPOLYTUS

Drained of honour, 'tis wan.

PHAEDRA

Honour ! Thou hast it. I give it thee.

HIPPOLYTUS

Thou ?

PHAEDRA

Power is honour.
Minos dieth ; Crete falleth mine.
I give thee Crete.

HIPPOLYTUS

What canst thou give ?
Peace, let me die. I ask nothing of thee
But that.

PHAEDRA

To wrangle I came not.
Rather to sue.

HIPPOLYTUS

As master of slave,
A goad in thy hand, woman.

PHAEDRA

O not to add a curse
To those thou fightest I come !
But to redeem thy life, and mine,
Self-martyred by reproach not tolerable.
I do repent, Hippolytus—
I would repair ! Give me
Thy pardon !

HIPPOLYTUS

Peace, let me die.

PHAEDRA

Thou hast prevailed and mastered me !
I will keep peace, and thou shalt have it
So but thou kiss me.

HIPPOLYTUS

Kiss thee ?
Forgive thee ? Why should I not ?
Consecrate, I, to death ; see now
I kiss thee, Queen. Be mother of sons
That shall be kings if thou learn queenship.
Pass to more honour, and I to death
More smoothly, since purged of anger.

[He kisses her. She shivers, then clings to him.]

PHAEDRA

Not thy bright blood, O lord !
Nor death if I could encompass thee
So with my arms, so with my mouth,
That we twain might fly clinging together,
Conjoint in bliss ! Or if death must be
In wait for the twain, let us heap up
Our life-draught full, passing in swoon,
Contented that one wild joy
Hath crowned our thirst and left us filled !

[He rejects her.]

HIPPOLYTUS

Away, away !
Seek not again to sting in my wound,
Nor add one shame to the marks I bear.

PHAEDRA

Thou kissedst me ! By the Paphian's fire
And all her flames, leave not thou me !

HIPPOLYTUS

Now, by thy brows benign,
Artemis, bend down thy face to me !

[Her arms are about him.]

PHAEDRA

See now, my lips are a pasture-ground,
Mine eyes, see, they are brimmed with love !
See my cheeks, are they fresh ? Is my side
cool ?

Is here a blossom worthy to pluck ?
Treasured for thy strong harvesting, lord !

[He sees her not, nor regards her.]

HIPPOLYTUS

O thou foolish, insensible,
Whom worm hath bitten, and made
Within thy heart his cancerous nest.

And seared thine eyes, and blotted the
world—

Learn of the wreck thou hast made of mine,
Of that fair garden, once my world !

When thro' thy deed I first blasphemed
The cradling light that held us both,
Scared to panic, o'er land and sea,
O'er sea and land and sky I ranged,
Crying in empty realms of the air,
"Thou Spirit of Life, appear, be seen !
Kill me, but openly ; let me see
Thy fair cruel face, that I once knew kind !"
The blue stared, and the naked sun
Pitiless cut my eyes. The blood
Masked them, that thro' the film flared red
The very sky ; so I knew, not there
Dwelt he, but only hatred and strife.
God was not ; but only Enormity.

Then in my pain I turned to the hills,
The lonely mountains, whose gazing peaks
Climb out of ken and bathe in the silence,
Of old how lovely ! But out of them
Love spake nothing. An eagle screamed
Above a lamb leagues under him ;
And the rock stared with sightless eyes
On murder brooding. I dared the front
Of lapping mists, quiet as the snow,
Where vast in th' obscure I saw dim forms,

Saw gleams rending the dark—heard the
crying

As of great storms, and pent-back seas
Imminent with ruin and bulk of death,
Not coexistent with Love, nor coequal.

I shrieked—Where such terror may be,
seek never

For love ! Seek the earth—and fell my
length

With buried face in her breathing breast,
'Mong flowers and clinging grasses, swept
To and fro by the wind. Then slyly

Came lust to leer—out of thine eyes,
Woman ! and rent the earth amain

To an open grave, still yawning for me,
Filled with the rotting bones of love,
Murdered. I sought the calm of the sea :

Poseidon, couching in mantle grey,
Turned me from all his laughing places,
Where the sun sheds a welter of gold,

Or the wide water sways in sleep,
To face dismay of rocks and scars,
Where dominion is to the snake and the weed,
And tangles drift ; to oozy places

Where the sun comes not, nor freshet tide,
Not healing breeze with morning in it ;

But all's a bloat and scummy growth
Of wrack of spent ships, wan dead men,
Smooth-lidded traps of unmanly death !

Treachery lurked there, watching. I paled
And crouched, saying, Love is not here !

Then where is Love ? Ah, thou hast killed
him !

Thou and thy vice ! Go, sin no more,
Lest I say, God made thee, and lust is God.

PHAEDRA has withdrawn herself from him, and now
covers her face.

PHAEDRA (low)

O cruel, O harsh, inexorable
Mis-handler of women ! How do I sin
When I lift fading eyes to the light ?
Is it a sin that I seek to live, or a sin
That youth calls clear unto youth ? O heart,
Shall spring wither, and summer go,
Boon autumn, with corn-sheaves in her arms,
Pass, she too, looking down ? So all
The rout of the years, the flood-tide of life
Course by us, bowed like grass to the sickle ?
Not that, Hippolytus ; love was given
To us for fruitage——

HIPPOLYTUS (aside)

I see in the woodland
My Goddess, pure in the white light
That rays at even from the first clear star,
In still, high-girdled raiment !

(TO PHAEDRA)

But thou——
Thou manglest love as thou hast me,

With flesh-hooks raking his crimson wings
Down from the sky ! Wilt thou rob God ?

[She straineth towards him.

PHAEDRA

I am distraught, my breath comes thick,
Mine eyes are a scalding waste of tears ;
Fever eateth me : see, I fall down,
I fall to thy feet. Hippolytus !
Shame me, do with me as thou wilt—
Phaedra the queen, thy dog !
Spurn or misuse me—let me be with thee !

HIPPOLYTUS

I pray for you whom frenzy enters,
For you whom craving possesses and tears.

PHAEDRA

Kiss me again—ah, but thou shalt !
I have thy hand in my wasted hands—
I cling to thy knees—I clasp thy chin !
Stoop now, kissing me once ! O Gods !
I would spend all the glory of Athens
That this tall youth once kiss my mouth !
Lay thy proud lips on mine, Hippolytus,
I anguish for them !

HIPPOLYTUS

Off! Thou art foul,
A leprous woman and poisonous.
I shake thee off. Go, drag thy shame
Where cleansing waters are. Taint me not.

Then he spurns her, and she recoils, and rage gathers
in her, and breaks.

PHAEDRA

So! 'Tis enough. Then, sick self-lover,
Go thou to death, a craven soul
That watches a woman shame herself,
And gathers credit from each poor shift.
Ah, but thou heartenest me for this work!

I could have saved thee, lulled the curse
Pronounced upon thee and stooping for thee,
The cold and curse of the sea, the malice
Hid in the rocks, with death,
Pale Death and Disaster on the watch.
I would not save thee now; I would stand
And watch the spilling thy traitor life,
And laugh with clamour of shrill sea-birds
Sure of a feast. Nay, listen and tremble!
I invoke Poseidon, the storm-dweller,
And all his horror: white sea-squalls
That creeping cast their frozen shrouds,
Gulfs of wet ruin, crested waves
That race and ride each other in haste;
Let these tear thy carcase as the teeth

Of rocks ; suck thee under the traps
 And shelves of rocks, that gaping fish,
 Slow, blind monsters of soundless seas,
 Crawl groping over thee. Nor rest then !
 Let the unstaying sea give thee, wretch,
 No stay at all, but toy with thee
 In mock perpetual of ebb and flow,
 Thro' tumult of black and stormy nights,
 Through listless, long and idle days,
 Till weed and scum, sickening of thee,
 Bid blind worms fret thee to a rag ;
 Cast thee unhonoured, not sought, forgotten,
 A loathing to thy foes, a burden
 To that which gloated thy full of shame—
 Dung for the spawn of tideless beds.

Hear me, thou Ancient of the Sea,
 Poseidon ! Pale-eyed Thetis, hear !

[HIPPOLYTUS sets a foot on his chariot.

HIPPOLYTUS

O woman, that dost rail to ease thy rankle
 Of shame and scorn of thyself ;
 Thou that seekest to add
 A pain to the pain I have lived,
 What dost thou think of death ?
 Think'st thou he makes his bed in a thicket
 of spines ?
 Nay, but his ways are quiet ;

He dwelleth in fragrant places
Of sleep, full of dreams, husht by murmuring
pines.

Look now, Phaedra, slave of desire,
I have trodden the mire
Of envious days ; I have called upon God
To turn the light of his face.
No sign ! Heaven was black,
And black the mantle he laid upon earth.
Nothing for me spake of love, who prayed.
Then I fell back
From the chase, saying, Curst from birth !
That, seeing, I might not know,
Not hearing, discover
The flame of that Spirit that broods and stirs,
and is love !

Yet I know the hour is at hand when that
fairest, that flusht
Presence of God shall be here, to enfold us
and lap us
In a soft haven of solace, a beam of his light
Shed on faint souls from the dawn. For I
know
Love, the King, liveth unseen, yet unheard,
not felt,
But to be known of men when the way shall
be lit
By the torches of God, now hidden from me !
So I die well at ease, for behold ! Love is
in me, enshrined, but not known !

I that was formed to be of Love the lover,
To sing his praises, now seek surefoot death,
Seeing that other issue is denied me,
The gleam I joyed in quenched and dark.
Ho, now, Poseidon, have thy pleasure of me !

[He mounts his chariot and gathers the reins.

PHAEDRA

Go, scorner, of the voice of women crying,
Slink thou, accurst from birth, to death more
sharp.

HIPPOLYTUS drives his team down the path to the sea.
The CHORUS come forward and watch him from the
edge of the cliff. The storm is at its height.

CHORUS

Pride sitteth on his brows as on a throne,
And he goeth, splendid, alone,
By the foam-shattered, ruinous waste of the
shore.

The sea is mad, and shudders beneath
The knees of the mighty one,
Even Poseidon that holdeth the reins. The
sea gnashes his teeth.

The way lies withered and frore :
Yet the hero urgeth him on.

PHAEDRA

Not for long !
Hardly shall sea hold off so much as a span,

For Poseidon watches and waits.
Hear ye the mew's ? They are hoarse, they
wheel as the Fates
That hanker the drowned eyes of a man
And the tossed soul of him too !
So let him weary of watching, and lo ! when
manhood abates,
He shall tire, and they in a throng
Scream, and hover, and pounce !

CHORUS

The wind raveth, I hear the shuddering
trees !
Now it buffets the crest of the flood !
The sea is amazed, distraught ; yet the knees
Of the terrible rider have grip.
The wind is his whip !
Ho, he cutteth the water, he raises his arm
To passionate evil : the sea is white with
alarm—
As a flogged horse, he showeth the whites of
his eyes !
Now, beneficent Gods, help ye, arise
Ere the hero dies !

PHAEDRA

Vain your crying ; the Gods are throned in
the skies ;
Haply they feast. Poseidon only is here,
Taking his sport !

Lover, he, of the storm, and sudden shock
of a wreck,
The smooth, water-drowned deck,
And ship reeling to port,
Tossed, buffeted, trapped, derelict,
With her wan sailors arow !
Haste, Shaker of Earth, let his end be quick,
Let his end be now !

CHORUS

Lo, he is well on the way
And urgeth mainly the steeds
O'er the water-swept beach ! The gale
maketh them swerve ;
They are restive, they sway ;
The tide races on—reaches—he's down !
Nay, nay !
O might of iron-cast nerve,
O King, thou'rt a King this day
For heroes to serve !

PHAEDRA (not looking)

What, does he linger yet,
Outcast, spurned of women and Gods ?
Do the waves still fret
To be at him and raven him down ?
Surely Poseidon, brooder of tempest, nods,
Or the sea surgeth in vain !
Hark to the battle above us—the sky is in
pain !

Hark to the thunderous billows, the sweep of
the rain,
Hissing as rods
To beat to frenzy the struck flank of the
main !
Tell me now, what canst thou see ?

CHORUS

The foam is flung as a mist, the land is washt
out :
Nothing ! The sea-beast is loose.

PHAEDRA

Yea, for I hear him and join in the shout.

CHORUS

Woe ! Woe ! look about, look about !
Wave upon wave, fury fury pursues !
Now all is clear. I can see.

PHAEDRA

Hippolytus, where is he ?

CHORUS

The sea is upon him, about him, above—
The green billow hangs curving in air—
All the eyes of the sea are angry and bare !

It hangs quivering, mountainous, tossed—
 Heu ! It falls—he is lost—he is lost !
 Horses and man sweep out, to death and
 despair !
 O queen, a hero went there !

PHAEDRA

Lo, for an end of him, scorner of love !
 Lo, Poseidon, conqueror ! Masterful sea !
 Lo, Phaedra, triumphing, queen to the end !
 He cast me below him, and even below is he.

[A pause.

Hark to this clamour, than storm more shrill.
 Who cometh crying ?

CHORUS (looking landwards)

With fear-fanned eyes,
 As one that's looked on havoc, he comes
 Beating his way through the horsemen of
 air—
 A Cretan ! Speak, we are Cretans.

[A MESSENGER from the tents comes in swiftly.

MESSENGER

The King ! King Minos !

PHAEDRA

Tell what thou hast of the King my father.

MESSENGER

He *was* thy father.

PHAEDRA (lifting her head)

King of Crete !

Now, Gods, ye mock me ! I seek him out.

[She goes out to the tents.

CHORUS

O ever dreadful, sudden in haste—
How like a cloud she scourgeth on
With black hair flying, and thin hands
Raised up to tear the light. Speak thou.

MESSENGER

The old King slept,
But murmured in his sleep, and stirred, and
 woke,
Saying in cold fashion, "The end is nigh.
Bring ye my harness." So we did, and he,
Raising himself, did do on bronze and leather,
Set his great helm with nodding crest
Upon his head, his sword to thigh,
His sceptre took, and lightning-charged
 shield,
And sat enthroned, as he were judge for Zeus
Once more in Crete. So silence fell
Wherein no man durst say him anything ;

Nor did he speak.

 We heard the tramp of men,
The creak and groan of chariot-wheels,
And panic fell on all, except on Minos,
Set mute and cold above the bed
With never glance or stir. They burst the
 doors,
A horde of shagged, fierce-eyed and sullen
 men,
Hungry for prey. But Minos sat still,
As carved in marble, a frozen king ;
And no man spake nor moved. Then,
 when the storm
Seemed at its high of furious possession,
And a vast bulk of water struck,
To shake the broad foundations of the earth,
The pallid King rose slowly, and spake like
 death,
Saying, "This is the Doom declared by
 Zeus.
Evil was done ; evil ensued ; and now
Evil must end." And then he sat
Again upon his throne, and bowed his head
Down to his two stiff knees, and stayed, and
 died—
Alone, untoucht, indomitable.

CHORUS

Where is thy victory, sea ? Where, death,
thy pride ?

Where, thin-lipped hate, thy pleasure in
men's grief?

So died Hippolytus, so Minos died,
Meeting you, armoured thus.
Facing you thus, they died,
Scorning your dreadful state ;
And each victorious
Sought out the Fields Elysian, glorified.

Yet on Hippolytus
Ye laid a vengeance keen ;
Ardent Hippolytus
That kept him chaste and clean
For sake of Her whom, loving, he could not
know.

Hapless his fortune was
That seeking high and low,
Calling on Love, Love never showed his wing,
Nor hope could bring
That of some far-off day the dawn would
spring
To show earth beauteous.

Let us bewail his lamentable death,
And tell his tale wherever youth
Longeth and meeteth ruth.
Let the sweet breath
Of virgins sigh over his grave,
The murmuring wave
That serveth him at once for sod and funeral
stave.

MESSENGER

The sea holdeth Hippolytus :
What can ye pay, what rite,
Where is no corpse, nor tomb to hallow ?

CHORUS

Justly thou speakest. Seek rather we
Our great-hearted King.

MESSENGER

Seek Phaedra first,
Last of his house, last King of Crete.

CHORUS

Sombre-browed as of old,
She cometh with convulséd hands
And ruin scowling across her !
O thou terrible Queen, harder than life,
Fiercer than death,
Look not so forceful upon us !

[PHAEDRA enters now.

PHAEDRA

Minos is dead, passing a King
With all his state about him.
He might have lived, but is dead.
What say ye ? The kingship falleth to me,
Last of the House of the Bull.

CHORUS

Who can be King when storm is King ?

PHAEDRA

The storm that wrecked Hippolytus
Wrecketh me not. Where ebbs your
Dorian spirit ?

CHORUS

He shows the stoutest nerve who mourns
Wrong done, good deeds avoided.

PHAEDRA

Let those who covet safety follow
Their queen. Who cometh here ?

ARTEMIS appears, robed now in grey. She carries a torch. The dusk is falling in, and the storm has abated.

Who art thou, Spirit, walking as God ?

ARTEMIS

Thou last of an iron stock,
That thinkest to delay
Doom by thyself prepared ;
Seeker of ill, and cheat
Of thyself, why should I stay ?

Hast thou not wrought woe enough ?
 Death struck thy father lies
 Whom death of thy lust had saved :
 Is it enough ? Thy lord dishonoured,
 Thyself blood-guilty for him ;
 The Seer of lovely things under the sun,
 Struck to the soul,
 Blighted by thee to see foul things in sweet
 things :
 Pasiphaë's child, is this work enough ?
 Shall I delay ?

PHAEDRA (awed)

I know thee not.
 Yet do believe thou hast that strength
 Thou vauntest. I think thou art God.

CHORUS

Artemis ! Artemis !

PHAEDRA

Hear then, Goddess. By my father's soul
 I fear thee not. That which I did
 Was sown in me from my mother's womb,
 As her deed in hers. We sowed it not,
 But goaded like cattle followed the doom
 Set of old. No fault at all
 Lies in us fettered ones, swirling as wrack
 Upon a flood racing to sea.
 Strike therefore soon.

ARTEMIS

I make an end
 Of thee and wrangling matters too high
 For thee to stretch at. Evil and Good
 Were set before thee. Thou wouldst sup ill.
 Thou madest choice. Now get thee back-
 ward.
 Poseidon awaiteth.

The GODDESS advances, and PHAEDRA, as if fighting invisible foes, steps back and back until she stands with her arms extended on the very verge of the cliff. She sees her peril, but is careless to avoid it. The GODDESS lifts her hand, and PHAEDRA with a great cry falls over the cliff. The CHORUS describe this action in quick whispers.

CHORUS

She edgeth backward, fending with hands,
 As one that fighteth the breath of fire ;
 Hatred haunteth her eyes and shame
 Unacknowledged and undeclared !
 Ah ! Ah ! This is the end.
 Now she is gone down quick to the doom
 prepared.

[They assemble themselves.

Begotten in wrong, with wrong upheld, and
 by wrong
 Driven to outraged end,
 Lo, the portion of him who seeketh out God
 To make him a friend !

God must abide with God world without end,
And man cleave unto man on this mortal
road.

What is the Wisdom of God without Power
of God?

What Power, Wisdom, without the Love
that is only in men,

Only for them? Our masters have trod
And bruised us to blood—and how shall
Love come again,

Since Wisdom ministers Lust, and Power
spreadeth Lust abroad?

Shall there ever be Gods with love as of men,
Or men nurse love in their hearts with
wisdom of Gods

And power of Gods?

Scourged and beaten with rods,

Curst and hated in vain,

Can a God-man be, lord of himself and the
hour,

Welding in one Love and Wisdom and
Power?

Earth should kiss Heaven then.

Enough, Goddess, enough!

Is not the cup of thy vengeance full?

One by one they have perished, gone into
the night—

As one that travelleth far

They have set their faces away,
And their place knows them no more !

So in bad blood and hardened hearts begun,
And in conflicting lust
The terrible tale is told.
Stay now thy hand, Artemis ! Put up thy
spear,
Thou that strikest the deer !
Smile out upon us, Maid without fear,
For smitten to dust
All the pomp of Minos and pride of his
state,
Fallen, fallen, that once were goodly and
great ;
And all the Blood of the Bull spilt as it was
foretold.

[The light rays again from the GODDESS.

ARTEMIS

Comfort ye, for the youth Hippolytus
Liveth, pure of his grief, his passion
Spent—in calm of vigil and prayer,
With me in communion not of this world.

Deep in the woodland he hath his home,
By the lake where no foot breaketh the
silence :
There I visit him, there he loveth me,
There of each other we take our joy.

Comfort ye, Love cannot die that lendeth
Rather than earneth. Ye Cretan wanderers,
Follow your hope ! In this high fashion
God and Man mingle and mate each other :

Emptied each, and each fulfilled
By love supreme that seeketh no price,
Here and in Heaven they set a kingdom
Fast for ever for all ye sorrowful.

Seek ye the ships, launch for your land,
Homeward hie, passing in trustfulness
Crest and furrow ; holding in patience
Your way over sea—for strife is ended.

[ARTEMIS disappears.]

CHORUS

This is a faithful saying ! and since She
Whom ever Dorian eyes have sought,
And to their children taught,
Leaveth us now with words of peace,
Let us await the issue she decrees ;
Bowing our heads until the storm be past,
Waiting with hope the promise of new day.

The storm has died down. There is no wind, and
over sea a bar of pale amber light shows, low down in
the sky.

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